



THOMAS POTTINGER,

9, Eastcheap,

LONDON BRIDGE.

R. H. Gilman, 1894-1895

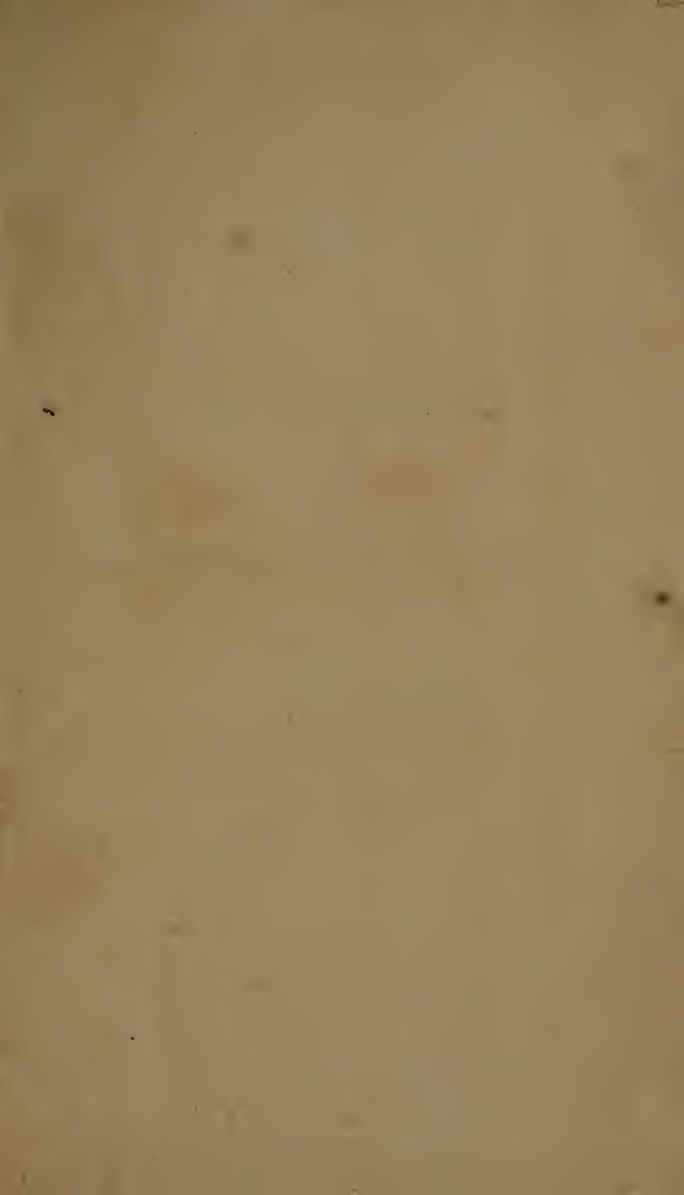


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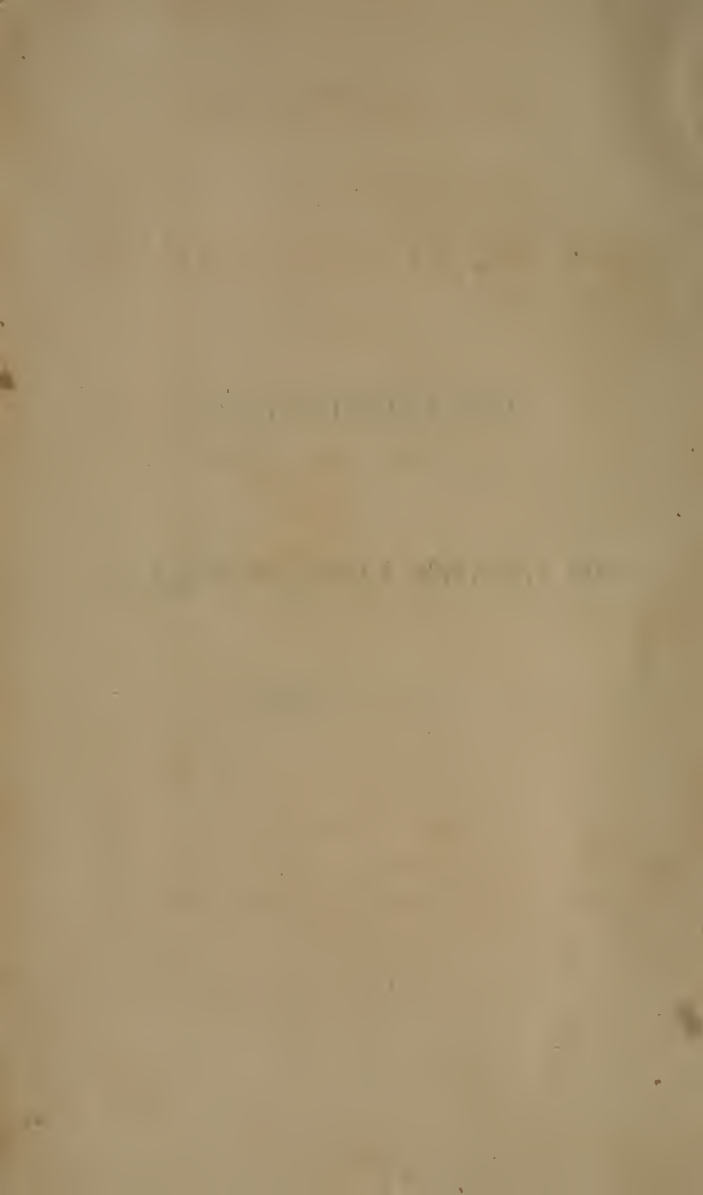


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THE CONFESSIONS
OF
SIR HENRY LONGUEVILLE.



THE CONFESSIONS
OF
SIR HENRY LONGUEVILLE.

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,
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—“ Shall we say that God hath joined error, fraud, unfitness, wrath, contention, perpetual loneliness, perpetual discord? Whatever lust, or wine, or witchery, threat or enticement, avarice or ambition, hath joined together, faithful or unfaithful, christian with anti-christian, hate with hate, or hate with love—shall we say this is God’s joining?”

MILTON, *Tetrac.*

—“ But unfitness and contrariety frustrate and nullify for ever, unless it be a rare chance, all the good and peace of wedded conversation, and leave nothing between them enjoyable, but a prone and savage necessity, not worth the name of marriage, unaccompanied with love.”

Id. Colast.

CONFESSIONS
OF
SIR HENRY LONGUEVILLE.

FRAGMENT I.

MATILDA ARUNDEL *to* ISABELLA
WOODEFORDE.

AT the conclusion of my last letter I promised that my next would commence with the relation of an extraordinary occurrence. I know not whether I ought to relate it, for fear you should think that I am too liable to be interested by an

event, probably not deserving of much notice. Yet certainly you will allow it to be singular, and not unworthy to be recorded. As such, I own it has affected me. Nor need I blush to confess, that I am interested in the fate of an unknown and mysterious stranger.

In this remote neighbourhood every occurrence is seized on with avidity, to beguile the tedium of minds whose internal resources are weak. A few minutes ago, I heard one of our talkative visitors giving an account of the *madman* who had come to reside at Wythorpe manor-house. But I shall not repeat the foolish calumnies that are already in circulation. How soon has the envenomed tongue of

slander attacked the character of an unknown, and perhaps amiable individual !

You know my brother is a physiognomist. Not long ago he happened to observe the arrival of a stranger in this village, by whose appearance he could not help being deeply interested and prepossessed. It was on one of those sweet autumnal days before this dreary weather made its appearance, on whose serene aspect remembrance delights to dwell. Departing autumn had already diffused her richest colours over our extensive woods,—colours rendered doubly interesting, because they were so soon to fade away ; and the yellow gleams rested on the variegated canopy of the forest.

You know my passion for this most enchanting of all seasons. The skies were invested with that sweet serenity and mildness of aspect peculiar to autumn, and the waters reflected the clear azure unruffled as in a mirror, for hardly a zephyr disturbed their tranquillity. The woods were silent, save when the cheering voice of the red-breast bade the wanderer's heart rejoice, or the solitary cry of the falcon sounded from the cliffs, or the woodman's stroke was heard from the beautiful copsewood which covers the mountain H——.

The whole scene was such as might have given rise to Mr Southey's delightful remark,

"The influences

Of that sweet autumn day made every sense
Alive to every impulse ;"

and could any impulse arise but that of heartfelt gratitude to the Giver of all good, and participation in the general tranquillity and joy ?

A pedestrian stranger arrived in the village, whose appearance seemed to answer this question, not in the negative, but the affirmative. All eyes were turned on him, for his looks were sufficiently uncommon to excite very reasonable curiosity ; but there were not then a great many observers.

His whole countenance was haggard, and betrayed exhaustion, from fatigue of body and anxiety of mind. It was evident, however, that the contrast which the stranger's looks afforded to the tranquil scenery around him, did not arise from insensibility, but from the effects of a deep-rooted sorrow. Notwithstanding its depressing influence, a judicious observer could not meet the glance of this wanderer's eye, without marking the internal workings of a great spirit,—without discovering the unequivocal fire of genius. At intervals he turned, seemingly insensible to the enquiring gaze of those who were present, to cast glances full of soul on the blue waters that shone through the pale gossamery haze at a

distance, and on the magic gleams that rested on the wooded and rocky cliffs over his head. His complexion was dark, his features regular and elegant ; but he possessed that appearance of high rank and refinement, which, when once thoroughly acquired, is not easily lost under a temporary disguise.

Such was the account which my brother gave on returning from his walk. He was laughed and lectured out of his prepossessions, till at last we fairly ceased to comment or meditate on the story.

You too will laugh at them, Isabella. You will laugh at my romantic folly, as you term it, in repeating such a fanciful

detail. But let those only who have lived as I have done,—who have never experienced the luxury of knowing that there existed a soul whose feelings were responsive to mine, attempt to imagine with what a thrill of interest I heard this account.

You will perhaps say, that I am not without sympathy; for Edward is as extravagant as myself! Alas! how are you deceived! Edward is amiable indeed, and is not naturally destitute of sensibility; but his feelings are too much fettered by his literary researches,—his disposition is too much chilled by the philosophy of the ancients, to permit him to think as I do. I am on this account the more dis-

posed to believe that the stranger is indeed possessed of wonderful talents and fascinations, otherwise Edward's attention would not have been excited.

Three days ago, at the time when our serene weather first began to take its departure, I wandered out alone, for my brother was busily engaged in the library. Dark and louring clouds came from the south, and settled on the mountains, imparting browner hues to the distant heath, and frowning in awful gloom over the fading woods. Yet the air was mild and soothing. The red-breast carolled on the trees, on whose dank leaves rested the heavy dew-drops, and the fallen foliage sent up a perfume grateful to the unvi-

tiated sense of those, to whom Nature in all her changes is interesting. I went, regardless of the threatening sky, and carried with me a book in which I was interested ; but my thoughts insensibly wandered to the subject which had been discussed a few days before. I chose that road to the lake by which I was least likely to meet with passengers, and occasionally renewed my attempts to read. Slowly, and lost in thought, I pursued my way through the forest by a narrow and winding path, frequently crossed by matted roots, which rose above the surface, and obstructed by trees lately felled by the woodman.

My book was the first edition of Thom-

son's Winter, in which he has so exquisitely touched on the charms of departing autumn. What rapture do I not feel, as, from the inspired pages of his poetry, I turn to the living breathing commentary which exists around me !

I had passed through the tangled copse-wood ; and the foot-path, which affords the nearest, as well as most retired approach to the lake, now joined a carriage-road, which wound closely round the margin of the water, whose bosom, reflecting the dark clouds which overspread the sky, was agitated into large waves by a strong breeze which now began to blow from the south-west. From the high and rocky mountains, covered with wild-

wood, which everywhere surround this extensive and beautiful lake, the breeze had already driven the heavy vapours ; but the frowning skies imparted gloom and melancholy to their caverned recesses and shadowy forests. The chafed waters came dashing to the shore in large waves, and I looked around with awful impressions on the majestic scenery. With a fearful interest, which I could not repress, I beheld advancing a figure in a dark-coloured dress, which, even at the first glance, I could not doubt to be that of the stranger. He was moving along a part of the road which is washed by the waters of the lake, and is partially defended from them by a rugged barrier of large and flat pieces of rock, placed edge-

wise along the shore. Beneath this barrier, the water, in consequence of its restraint, has become very deep, and was now beating with violence against the rocks.

It was with grief and alarm that I beheld the looks and gestures of the stranger, which were now far more wild, unsettled, and melancholy, than my brother described them. My first impressions, notwithstanding the elegance of his person, were, that he must be an outrageous maniac, broken loose from his keepers ; on which idea I was about to return home suddenly ; but as he approached, and I ventured for an instant to look on him, I could not perceive any traces of fury in

his countenance. It had the wildness of sorrow, not that of positive insanity.

I now, however, saw with increasing terror, that, unconscious of being observed, he frequently stopped, and looked wildly on the deep water, on which the breezes strewed the yellow leaves of the forest, instantly to be swallowed up in the gulph. I could not help recollecting the well-known lines of T. Warton :—

“ Full oft, unknowing and unknown,
He wore his endless woes alone,

Amid the autumnal wood ;
Oft was he wont, in moody fit,
Abrupt the social board to quit,
And gaze with eager glance upon the tumbling
flood.

Unavoidably alarmed, I walked quickly on, hoping to divert his attention, should he in reality make a desperate attempt on his own life. He held a book in his hand, from which, when I first descried him at a distance, he had been tearing out the leaves and strewing them on the ground in unconscious agony. I could not suffer my sight to rest on him. I saw, however, that his sallow cheeks wore the mournful impressions of corroding care and incessant thought; yet his countenance was elegant, and his eyes, large and dark, gave evidence, by their wild and fiery energy, to the deep and powerful emotions of the spirit within. He seemed so much absorbed in the workings of his own fancy, that he had, in a

great measure, lost the habit of attending to any external objects, save the grand scenery of nature. I know not how I was able to make so many observations ; for, as we met on the road, I trembled so much, and so deadly a chill came over my frame, that I lost all distinct ideas, and could not remove my eyes from the ground. After he had really past, I breathed more freely, and walked with rapidity ; till, disconcerted by a few drops of rain which now began to fall, and fatigued by the rude buffetting of a strong southern breeze, I turned hastily homeward. In repassing the spot where the stranger had first appeared, my attention was attracted by some of the scattered leaves which he had torn from his book. I pick-

ed up one, and found it to be a fragment of Mr Scott's admirable "Lay of the Last Minstrel." This occurrence added to my favourable opinion of the mysterious unknown. That celebrated poet had probably been the delight of his happier days ; and now this volume, his favourite companion, had been destroyed in the bitterness of his soul, with the same sort of passionate resolution which Mr Hayley has so well described in his character of Chatterton :—

"Tears from his harp the vain detested wires,
And in the phrenzy of despair expires."

I now walked, or rather ran quickly, to escape the rain ; and when I arrived within a few yards of the village, I had

the satisfaction to observe the stranger walking in a regular, though somewhat hurried pace. To my surprise, however, when he arrived at the entrance of the village, he suddenly turned from the road, as if acquainted with the bye-paths of the neighbourhood ; and taking a course, which I knew led to a deserted mansion-house on a wooded eminence, about half a mile distant from any other habitation, disappeared.

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FRAGMENT II.

*The same to the same.**October, 1810.*

My brother has become acquainted with the stranger!—At first, he says, Fitzalbyn was wrapt in an impenetrable veil of mystery. His words were evidently the farthest possible from the utterance of real feelings. But from circumstances that attended the rencontre, of which I have not now time to detail the particulars) he has at last obtained in some degree his confidence. Even my uncle, who laughed at Edward's prepos-

session, now takes more interest than could be expected from his disposition in our new acquaintance.

At first, as I have already said, Fitzalbyn seemed resolutely wrapt up in an impenetrable veil. He was like a man who, having been disappointed in his expectations from friendship and from love, is resolved never to permit himself the utterance of real sentiment or emotion, lest it should be received with indifference or *affected* sympathy.

But, at last, when this barrier was removed, when he began to perceive that Edward was not actuated by principles of unfeeling and idle curiosity, and that his

mind was fraught, not with affectation and deceit, but with disinterested virtue, his eye began to glisten with animation ; his tone of voice was altered ; and his remarks were at once so original, so elevated, so marked by concentration of thought and brilliance of illustration, that my brother boldly talks of him as an example of the most illustrious talents and virtue, and exults openly in his own powers of physiognomical discovery.

You are aware that our family is ancient—that it takes its rise in Britain from the period of the Norman conquest, and boasts the names of several statesmen and warriors. You are aware also that this circumstance, joined to Edward's love of

literature, has induced him to bestow much attention on our early writers. From conversing on the beautiful scenery in our vicinity, they were led to mention its antiquities, and were thus brought to converse on English history, and the poets and chroniclers of Albion's elder day.

Edward expresses the most perfect astonishment at the stranger's learning and genius. He himself is deeply read, and is not one of those cold-hearted students who contemplate these subjects without emotion. While they talked of past ages, Edward timidly brought forward some of his own ideas gleaned from the works of Chaucer, of our early romancers, and from his favourite, Lord

Berners. The stranger talked with the keenness of actual participation on the deeds of Prince Arthur and his knights ; on the splendid atchievements of English heroes in Palestine ; but the richest hues of his fancy were employed in recalling from the grave and decorating the magnanimous defenders of Scotland,—a Wallace and a Bruce. The stranger's name is said to be Fitzalbyn.

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FRAGMENT III.

The same to the same.

Do you recollect, Isabella, our having once visited together the deserted manor-house of Wythorpe? This has been taken by the stranger as a temporary residence for a short time. He is evidently a man of rank and fortune. But my brother has not obtained any correct information respecting his family, and believes the name of Fitzalbyn to be assumed.

I believe we did not obtain admission

either to the gardens or house at Wythorpe. You chose to be alarmed by the appearance of two large old mastiff-dogs. We only walked round it and admired its venerable trees, and the beauty of the surrounding scenery. The garden and the mansion-house itself are very singular. The latter is a perfect example of that strange taste for artificial ornament which is seldom found at an ancient baronial edifice.

A parlour, which is the favourite apartment of the stranger, has been made, by the inhabitants of modern times, to open into this garden. Here he delights, day after day, to watch the gradual changes of nature, while the south winds shower

the foliage of the neighbouring trees around him, and waft them into his apartment. There he remains often for whole days in a state of reverie ; from which it almost appears as if he would never awake, unless my brother (generally at a late hour of the day, for his own literary pursuits engross his mornings) did not disturb him.

Sometimes, indeed, he is seen to hurry abruptly along the walks with strange impetuosity, which alarms the old gardener or domestics. Edward says, that from the scraps of paper which are strewed around the room, he is certain that Fitzalbyn is a poet. But there is evidently some secret undivulged grief which is

undermining his constitution, and mars every attempt either at social or literary enjoyment.

My brother says he is resolved to mention the acquisition he has made of so interesting an acquaintance, to our friend Mr H——, who is himself an author, and who, he thinks, might have power to draw the stranger from brooding over his own griefs, by engaging him in some pursuits of consequence.

In the mean while, Edward takes great delight in supplying him with books, and he selects especially such as I have read. You know my propensity to draw lines with red ink, and write remarks on what-

ever interests my feelings ; and these remarks, Edward says, always rivet the attention of Fitzalbyn. I dare not tell you, Isabella, the delight with which this information inspires me.

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From hints that have been dropped by the stranger, Edward believes that he has been unfortunate in his attachments. How base, how void of soul must have been the individual, who could cause affliction to such a being !—I could—but, alas ! Isabella, you will say that I rave ; and, in truth, a strange cloudiness has spread itself over my mind. I know not the nature of my own feelings. I only know

that I am unhappy ;—that every day,
every hour, adds to my distraction.

FRAGMENT IV.

The same to the same.

November 18th, 1810.

AFTER a severe tempest, we have an interval of mild weather ; and though most of the trees have lost their foliage, our oak woods continue to possess all the pensive beauties of decay. The dank dark heaps, by which our forest walks are filled, impregnate the calm air with a languid, but not unpleasing, odour. Sometimes, when the west winds blow, and partial gleams rest on the fields and distant copse, I seem for a moment to view the

delightful scenery of spring ; and the lingering tints of autumn on the trees resemble in some measure the hue of the vernal buds before the young leaves have fully expanded. In one moment how many pleasing images are thus conjured up in the mind !—Yes ! there has been a time when I met the cheering aspect of spring with a mind unclouded and at rest, and feelings attuned in unison with the scenery of Nature. That time *has been*. I fear it never will return.

Our oak woods now seem to me in their greatest beauty ; at least their appearance is soothing to my present melancholy. This morning I met the stranger. As usual, he observed me not. He

seemed lost in thought ; but his countenance was illuminated as he gazed on the beauties of the scenery. I am certain his glance bespeaks a soul of fire refined above that of any other mortal,—a soul equalled perhaps by that of an Ariosto or a Shakspeare ! *But once*, since our first meeting on the banks of the lake, have I dared to meet that glance, and scarcely then. Since that period its impression has been indelible. It is never absent from my sight. In solitude or in society, in the dark hour of midnight or the brighter glow of noonday, it is alike present.—*But once* have I heard the rich tones of his voice ; yet even now they vibrate through my frame. My breath fails, as it did when I first heard them.

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This dreadful tale ! it haunts me like the curse of an evil genius ; yet I know it must be a calumny. There is a sufficiency of malignant envy apparent in the conduct of those who are most assiduous in spreading the reports, to sanction this decision.

I am doomed to receive every moment additional causes for inquietude, as if those already experienced had not been sufficient to ruin my peace. You know my dislike (this may seem an uncharitable feeling—it is involuntary,) to our neighbours the F——s. They are wealthy ; they are accomplished : but there is combined with their fashionable accomplishments, a degree of levity which I cannot

approve. Miss L——, the most dashing girl in this family, is said to have gained the affections of the stranger. Why should this not be ?—She sings ; she plays with inimitable brilliance of execution ; she reads also : yet long before I heard of this interesting stranger, I had learned to dislike her society. If the report is founded on truth, I believe I must alter my opinion of Fitzalbyn's character.—No !—my judgment of *him* must be unalterable !

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That such a being—so gifted with sensibility and genius, should have any real pleasure in the society of one who is

wholly destitute of both,—with whom he
 can have no sympathy !—It appears to me
 in every point of view impossible !

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FRAGMENT V.

The same to the same.

November, 1810.

I HAVE been watching the rise of a wintry sun. I used to meet his first rays with gladness and joy of heart. Those rays were not brighter than the brilliant and responsive images which played on my fancy. Would that it were so again! I am oppressed by a melancholy, for which I cannot account. To me, the fair face of Nature has “become a universal blank.”* Woods, mountains, vallies, and rivers! where are your wonted charms to sooth

* Cowper.

a wounded spirit? Leaf-strown paths, through which I yet love to wander! where are those odours which once awoke my feelings to ecstasy?—The same charms perhaps exist; but on my heart they have ceased to have their wonted influence. I have said, that this melancholy is unaccountable. I believe it is not wholly so; for I have lately been doomed to spend a day in the society of the F * * * s. Oh the horror of being imprisoned for a day and an evening with those with whom I never had a feeling in unison! whose obtrusive manners render their folly the more disgusting! to whom the mild serenity of an autumnal noon, or the wild grandeur of a tempest, are alike insipid and uninteresting! The consequences of

such a shock cannot easily be conquered. Dark clouds are yet resting on my fancy. Yet, since I began to write, they seem in some measure to disperse ; for the image of my friend cannot be revived without pleasure. It gleams like a sun-beam through the tempest. Yes ! I will yet have a day devoted to cheerfulness ; for my time shall be employed in conversing with her whose imagination has so often enchanted me by its beautiful creations ; whose judgment has so often recalled me from melancholy wanderings.

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But you have always had some one to sympathise with you. You have never

known the horror of that desolation of the heart, under which I have been doomed perpetually to suffer. Sometimes I eagerly give up my whole attention to painting, and endeavour to become absorbed in that pursuit—but, alas! it is impossible! The cares which embitter my existence return, and all is lassitude, and almost despondency.

If I have any pleasure, it is in those magic reveries when hope revels, in a thousand visionary enjoyments. Then I imagine that I am not indeed in solitude; that there is a heart which, though it beats not *for me*, yet is alive to the same pleasures which I experience;—but, alas! this is all idle dreaming and delu-

sion. The mind of Fitzalbyn, noble and elevated, constantly employed on lofty themes, surely cannot reasonably be supposed to have feelings in unison with mine.

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FRAGMENT VI.

The same to the same.

I HAVE again beheld the stranger!—
While I write this, my heart beats, and
my breath fails, as it did at our first
meeting. Whence proceeds this emo-
tion? To me for ever is denied the
power of soothing his secret sorrows,—
of assuaging the grief that seems to prey
on his mind. By me that happiness must
ever be unattainable. Why should I
dwell on his image? Why not rather by
active occupation banish it for ever from
my thoughts? And there *are* times in

which a kind of obscure gloom overshadows my mind, in which there is no distinct idea. At these times perhaps I suffer least. But, alas ! it is a state little to be envied. Isabella, you have never experienced this. You have never known what it is to frame illusions beautiful as the morning cloud,—visions such as poets only know !—You cannot, therefore, have experienced the bitter and wasting anguish of the contrast, when all that was once so smiling and so gay is filled only by imagery of grief and desolation !

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The following are mere broken scraps, in which scarcely any order or connection can be traced.

November, 1810.

THE west wind blew : its warm breath
 “ has power to cure all sadness but despair.” Yet my feelings are not soothed ;
 my spirits are not exhilarated. Am I
 then the victim of Despair ? Am I be-
 come insensible to Nature’s beauty ?

Oh the horror of knowing that all the
 charms of Nature (once so exhilarating,
 so inspiring,) are open before me,—that
 the same sources of innocent and inde-

pendent enjoyment are within my grasp,—
yet that I have no longer the power to
profit by them !

Oh there are woes which prey on the
mind and frame like the secret canker in
the flower !—In vain the sun sheds his
warm beams, and the fostering breezes
blow,—its leaves turn pale and wither
and decay.

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There are charms in the season of win-
ter which are peculiarly delightful. When
for a short interval the breeze becomes
mild, and the sun sheds, as in autumn,
his partial gleams ; or when, after a frosty

night, the winds are hushed, and the sun sheds on the lingering mists his unclouded splendour, and every rural sound comes full and distinct on the ear ;—the desolation of Nature, though melancholy, is soothing.

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The following Sonnet ought to have been inserted earlier, as it is dated in October.

Most melancholy Autumn ! in thy sway
 Loved fellowship in woe I seem to meet ;
 The brown, dank leaves are strew'd beneath my feet ;
 Thick hangs the heavy dew on weeping spray,
 And the high cliffs are veil'd in vapours grey !
 Down sinks the yellow leaf on waters dark,
 Soon swallow'd by the reckless stream ; and hark !

How deeply silent this autumnal day !
 Not sooner in the grove the leaves decay,
 Than in my heart each rapturous feeling dies :
 Not swifter on the stream they float away,
 Than each wild vision of the poet flies :
 Not darker fall around the sleeping clouds,
 Than the deep gloom that now my fancy shrouds.

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November 27th, 1810.

I have been out gazing on the moon.
 White clouds were floating between us
 and her orb, that in some degree obscured
 her light. Yet the scene was exquisitely
 pleasing. Little or no wind disturbed
 the placid serenity. Not a withered rem-
 nant of the foliage was heard to rustle on
 the beech or oak, not yet forsaken by the

lingering leaves : there was but just sufficient to move the white clouds through which the moon appeared majestically sailing. The little wind that was perceptible came from the west—soft and balmy.

* * *

I have returned from my walk. I have opened my window. The white clouds that lately obscured the moon have rolled away in a large mass to the south, and left her orb in unclouded serenity. How deeply still and tranquil this winter, or rather autumnal night ! for it has all the characteristics of the latter. The damp leaves have impregnated the air with mild

and not unpleasant odour. The silence is only broken by the deep murmur of the river “bursting on the ocean’s bed.”

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November 28th.

THE breezes are still mild. The moon again shines in wonted serenity. But my feelings are altered. I can no longer partake in the tranquil pleasures that surround me. Oh how dreadful! to meet the soft gale of evening without enjoyment,—to view my blazing hearth without comfort,—my books without a wish to read them!—I look out from my casement. The cool breeze again plays on my bosom. All *without* is chearful

and serene ;—but *within*, I look in vain
for responsive emotions. All *there* is
darkness and inquietude.

* * *

I know that the scenes in which I once
took such delight are open before me—
the self-same scenes of which I used to
say,

“ I care not, Fortune, what you me deny ;
You cannot rob me of free Nature’s grace.”

But their charms exist no longer for me
in their pure and unalloyed state. I feel
incessantly an anxiety which I strive in
vain to repress.

* * *

I believe I could bear my fate without repining, if it were not for the conduct of those around me. You know my aunt's unhappy temper; her repugnance to every thing that is dearest to my heart,—to every thing connected with literature or mental cultivation. I really believe she is never pleased, but when her harshness has succeeded in conquering both my spirits and temper, and in rendering me miserable. She is never pleased when any one is employed near her in enjoyments of which she cannot partake. When I burst into tears at her violence, she seems pleased. I see a grim satisfaction smoothing her brow. But, when I refuse to listen to her reproaches, and continue seemingly interested in the pur-

suit of my employment, whether reading, writing, or painting, her violence and persecution become incessant and insupportable.

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CONFESSIONS
OF
SIR HENRY LONGUEVILLE.

CHAPTER I.

What transport to retrace our early plays,
Our easy bliss, when each thing joy supplied,
The woods, the mountains, and the warbling maze
Of the wild brooks !——*Thomson.*

*Arm * * * waite, October, 1810.*

IT is midnight. Sleep visits not my
wearied eyes. But my woes have not
yet wholly triumphed. They have not

taken from me the perception of Nature's beauty. From my casement I breathe the mild and chill odour of the fallen foliage. I watch the moon's fair lamp sailing in wonted grandeur, in wonted serenity, through the wide unruffled azure. I trace the dark line of the woods and the mountains. Alas! *these* are not the well-known woods in which every tree was consecrated by some fond association of the past. The wandering streams that now glitter in the moonlight valley, are not the friends of my youth! Yet the scene has revived the feelings of "early time."

The deep stillness and solitude of night,—its obscurity and my want of

books,—naturally lead the mind to seek employment within itself, in the mere productions of the memory and the fancy. Those powers are busy ; and the sudden thought has occurred, that I may perhaps enliven and improve my solitary hours, by committing to paper the history of my past life. It must be written without effort, in detached fragments, as the floating images shall accidentally present themselves.

It is perhaps needless to observe, that few remarks are more unfounded than that the lives of literary men cannot afford materials for biography. Ought battles, and shipwrecks, and hair-breadth escapes, “ by sea and land,” to prove

more interesting, than an accurate picture of the internal operations of the mind?—a correct delineation of its progress,—of the formation of powers, and opinions, and guiding principles? For such a memorial of an Ariosto, a Shakspeare, or a Milton, what would we not give?

To die, without leaving a trace of those visions in which I so much delighted to indulge,—to expire like the withered leaf, which is swallowed up by the dark flood of autumn, “unwept, unhonoured,”—if this idea could be borne, I should not attempt to employ my feeble and trembling hand in tracing these lines. But the flame that was once kindled cannot wholly be extinguished. When the mind is not

incessantly employed in struggles after some interesting object, I am agonized by an accusing and restless conscience. If in my disordered intellect any one principle ever kept its unconquered dominion, the love of fame is that principle. I will endeavour to revive the faint and scattered traces of those internal workings of the mind,—of forms once adorned with all the brilliant hues of the western clouds on a summer's eve,—of landscapes gay with “promised scenes” at a “far distance.” I will endeavour to revive the faint and scattered traces ;—but, alas ! how are they broken and dispersed ! How shall I have strength to bear with my reflections on what *might have been*,—reflections that, more than

all others, haunt my path by day, and strew the midnight couch with thorns !

I was born in the county of Argyll, in Scotland. Descended from a race of illustrious ancestors, celebrated in Highland tradition, my father, Sir Arthur Longueville, unlike most modern proprietors of large fortune, was attached to retirement and to his own country. He was in his religion a Catholic ; possessed a cultivated mind ; and in his youth had resided much in France and in Italy. I have often heard, but do not clearly remember, the circumstances by which my family, though unquestionably attached to the cause of the Pretender, had yet preserved their estates amid the general wreck in 1745.

It would be tedious to conjecture and to detail the reasons by which my father was induced to rear an only son in the country, instead of sending him, like other young men of birth and fortune, early into the world. I spent the whole period of adolescence in constant retirement,---almost in complete solitude ;---but it was a solitude fitted not to contract, but to expand and ameliorate the soul.

Ye boundless plains, covered with purple heath ! Ye mountains of grey rock, overspread with wild wood waving its verdant ringlets in the breeze ! Ye wide lakes, fretted by wooded islands, and fantastic fragments broken from the mountain summit ! Methinks I once more feel

the wind wafting inspiration from your magic realm !

I have already said that I am descended from a race of illustrious ancestors. My sorrows have not so far overpowered my youthful enthusiasm, that I can describe without a feeling of past enjoyment the raptures experienced in meditating on the deeds of old, amid the very scenes of those exploits. I lived in that country, where innumerable legends and wild superstitions are handed from generation to generation,—in that remote district, where the progress of cultivation has not yet done away the remains either of the warlike or the pastoral life,---where every moss-covered cairn, every mouldering

ruin, almost every withered tree or shaggy cliff within the range of the shepherd, recalls some marvellous narrative of departed heroes, for which he delights to meet with an attentive listener. Such a listener was I ; and the tales, narrated in the rude language of a peasant, borrowed ornaments, which polished eloquence could not have afforded in any ordinary scene, from the magnificent objects around us, gilded, as it might happen, by the tranquil gleams of an autumnal noon, or the magic hues of a summer's eve.

Thus was my mind, at an early age, moulded into that frame in which there exists an inseparable connection between the intellectual and material world ;—a

characteristic indeed produced at first by the perusal of English poetry, and only strengthened afterwards by the legendary stores of my countrymen ;—but of this at another time. One of my favourite objects, in this narrative, will be to prove, that on such a connection, and on the sublimer passions to which it gives birth, are formed the purest, most elevated, and independent enjoyments. But, alas! there are too many readers who could not easily be convinced that such pleasures have ever actually existed !

Land of my fathers ! It is amid your solitudes, where, to every one that has a heart to feel, or an understanding to relish, the wild fictions of human genius, unfettered

by rules, uncramped by the formalities of artificial society, are presented enjoyments that can be met with in no other region. Mid your remote wildness yet linger the traces of the most sublime species of romance ! On your plains are to be found those fields of battle, where “ the tide of invasion was rolled back,” and where the ashes of those heroes repose who have died in defence of their country ! Amid your majestic scenery, amid your inspiring breezes, was fostered the most exalted and deep-rooted patriotism ;—that scorn of oppression, that contempt of difficulties and danger, which might afford the salutary lesson, that virtue, when assailed by misfortune, ought only to come forth more pure from the searching fire,

to shine with improved lustre, like the sun emerging through tempestuous clouds. Alas ! I myself have not given any such example of firmness and fortitude. Under the first blow, I shrank and shuddered. Repeated wounds have wholly overwhelmed me. But there are cares which more effectually destroy the mental powers, than the oppressions of a warlike adversary—an open and declared foe. When the bitter anguish of disappointed hope, the anguish of remorse and domestic misery, assail at one time ;—when that imagination, which used to elevate and to sooth, now uses all her influence to darken, to depress, and to distract ;—when those, from whom we hoped to derive comfort and consolation, present only the

depravity of vice, and the cruelty of a cold heart to our agonized minds, then it is that the man is indeed lost under his misfortunes !—I write not to those who have never known the influence of Imagination ; who cannot grasp an idea of her powers. To such I need not attempt to describe the state of her victim, when all the glowing tints and delightful visions of happier hours are changed, by the influence of affliction, into appalling spectres and imagery of horror. Let the cold-hearted think and preach as they will, there are minds that can admit of no middle state of enjoyment ; that must be either illuminated with the brightest rays of enthusiasm and hope, or haunted by

the most frightful goblins, and shadowed
by the most impenetrable gloom.

How beautiful is the well-known observation of Goldsmith, on the patriotism of the Swiss peasantry !

[“ Thus every good his native wilds impart
Imprints the patriot passion on his heart ;
And even those ills that round his mansion rise
Enhance the bliss his scanty fund supplies ;
Dear is that shed to which his soul conforms ;
And dear that hill which lifts him to the storms.
And, as a child, when scaring sounds molest,
Clings close and closer to the mother’s breast,
So the loud whirlwind and the torrent’s roar
But bind him to his native mountains more.”

Succeeding writers, as well as Gold-

smith himself, have amused themselves in pointing out reasons for this attachment. Various causes, no doubt, concur to produce the same end. But if patriotism be justly considered one of the noblest feelings in the human heart, may we not attribute its peculiar strength in the inhabitants of mountainous countries, to the powerful influence of the grand scenery of Nature, which invigorates the mind, as the mountain breezes invigorate the body, and rouses it to every elevated principle and nobler emotion? Should this be the case, what wonder that, to a mind so sublimed, every other region should appear almost contemptible, compared to those nurseries of pleasing and exalted thought,---the woods, rocks, mountains, and lakes

of its natal clime!—The warm and fertile valleys, the vineyards and gardens and cottages, whose walls are covered with fruits and hung with flowers, in France and Italy, where the warm breezes waft a thousand blended odours, and the glowing skies are resplendent with indescribable tints of glory, too often have a tendency to enervate the mind. In France, at least, those comforts have seldom given rise to such patriotism as that of a Scottish Highlander, and never have inspired “thoughts that breathe, and words that burn,” like those of a Thomson, a Burns, a Scott, or a Campbell.

My youth was not devoid of **grief** ; but it was illuminated by gleams of exquisite

pleasure, and the reign of the latter predominated. I was not one of the cold-hearted, who live by rule, who are never vanquished by misery, and never elevated by rapture. If I had even then felt the transient attacks of despondency, I could the next hour gather more ecstasy of enjoyment in one solitary walk, when the gleams of morning played in shifting hues of light and shade over the landscape, than an ordinary mortal could meet in the whole progress of a long life.—To watch

“ The ‘ vernal’ clouds that pass
 With varying shadow o’er the grass,
 And imitate on field and furrow
 Life’s chequered scene of joy and sorrow,”

was unspeakable transport ; to breathe the perfume of the faded leaves in autumn, to hear their rustling voice, and to sooth myself with hopes, after I had learned to arrest my visions in poetic numbers, that “ I should not *all* die,” afforded the balm of Elysium to my feelings.

Yet I began very early to feel myself as if alone in the world ; and to an incident which occurred in my early life, may be attributed much of my subsequent unhappiness. On the provocation arising from some childish dispute with my father, in which I had been harshly treated, I rushed out into the woods, threw myself headlong from a precipice into the lake beneath, from whence I was on-

ly rescued by the providential interference of a shepherd. This adventure was followed by a long and severe fit of illness. The vital organs sustained a shock, from which they never afterwards recovered. For a long time my brain was affected, and my whole frame was debilitated to the last degree.

It would, as I have already said, be tedious to conjecture my father's reasons for not sending me abroad at an early age, like other young men of rank. Suffice it to observe, he thought proper that my education should be private. I remember the time (it was about my ninth year) that the preceptor, to whose assistance my father looked forward, arrived

from the continent. I was in many respects fortunate in this tutor. He was originally a Scotchman, but had passed nearly all his life in France. He had imbibed the good qualities of the French nation, without their vices. He brought with him a certain share of Parisian elegance ; for, in consequence of his literary acquirements and conversational powers, he had been accustomed in France to the best society.—I have said, that I was in many respects fortunate in my tutor. He certainly possessed many good qualities ; but my best ideas were not derived from him. I gradually began to glean them from an admirable library, which filled a large room in my paternal mansion, and which my father, who was fond of books,

had collected at great expence. It contained an invaluable store of black letter chronicles, besides much old English poetry, with a large collection of novels and romances. Insensibly I became under the dominion of a passion for literature. Perhaps the foundation of this disposition was laid by the influence of solitude, and still more of an excessive delicacy and irritability of frame, which made me shrink with disgust from ordinary amusements. By degrees my passion for reading increased so far, as to produce the utmost horror at any interruption which withdrew me from my enjoyments. By degrees, too, I became self-sufficient and proud. It seemed to me as if I moved in a world of my own ; as if I had discovered a se-

cret treasure, which was reserved for me alone, and of which the immediate benefit could not be communicated to another. I felt a degree of exultation and secret rapture, as if I had entered a magnificent territory, a paradise of flowers and trees and fountains, peopled by celestial spirits, and had been told to close the gates, for that no ordinary being should enter.

Those who have plunged into the more active pursuits of life, who are surrounded by the bustle and tumult of cities, or whose sensibilities have been destroyed by too early and too constant commerce with the world, cannot participate in my feelings. They never know what it is to read an author in the manner that I did!—

They read mechanically. They coldly approve of beauties that seem to them at best only tolerable ;—they malignantly blazon forth his faults. Indeed the latter, by affording room to expectorate their spleen, often seem to such readers the more acceptable of the two. I knew not what it was to read books in this fashion. I did not reason on what I read. I only felt in unison with the author ; and if my *judgement* was not always correct, my *feelings* were ever most keen and most susceptible.

To my passion for literature I soon added an exclusive and enthusiastic partiality to rural solitude. I well remember the time at which this last feature in my character was produced. It was at

the approach of summer, in my fifteenth year, that one morning, continuing my usual employments in the library, I happened to meet with three small volumes elegantly bound, which in a moment of languor attracted me, more from the neatness of their external appearance, than from the knowledge of their intrinsic worth. On opening the volumes, I was pleased to find that two of them consisted of the poetical works of Milton, and the third was a collection of poems published at Edinburgh in 1759, containing some of the earlier and best productions of T. Warton.

I immediately began to peruse his delightful “ Ode on the Approach of Sum-

mer," in that volume ; and afterwards, invited by the similarity of his manner to some of the juvenile productions of Milton, read with avidity the " Allegro" and " Penseroso," and afterwards the " Lycidas" and " Comus."

Let not those who have never perused these or similar poems in the freedom of rural retirement, " in the quiet and seclusion of the scenes which gave them birth ;" where every object formed a living comment on the words of the author, attempt either to approve or to censure the raptures with which I was immediately overwhelmed, and as it were borne away into new and unexplored regions of delight.

I had never before, strange as it may appear, discovered the inexhaustible charms which are to be found in the scenery of Nature. I had lived among fields and woods, without experiencing the peculiar influences which are to be derived from the heavens and earth, and the phenomena of the atmosphere. I was now awakened from my trance. A gleam of celestial inspiration had dawned on my intellect. My former visions seemed to shrink into insignificance, as if "blasted by excess of light." I devoured the remainder of Milton's poetry, including the "Paradise Lost." These three volumes were my constant companions. One or other was always in my pocket, ready to be had recourse to in my woodland ram-

bles. I lay on the brink of the précipice, and, amid the loud dashing of the mountain cataract, soothed my perturbed feelings by the exercise alternately of reading and reciting. I say my perturbed feelings ; for my delight was almost too intense.

My favourite poems were, the Morning Hymn in "Paradise Lost ;" the "Ode on the Approach of Summer," by T. Warton ; and, above all, the "Lycidas" of Milton. My favourite time for reading and reciting this last poem was in the twilight of a summer's eve, when the yellow light of evening fell on the pages, and rested on the wooded cliffs of a neighbouring mountain, and the soft dews of

night hung on the wide-extended copse-wood around me. I never could recite this divine poem without bursting into tears of rapture. Even now I feel a faint glow of reviving enthusiasm, as I recollect the lines that became the favourites of my boyish fancy :—

—— “ Return, Sicilian muse,
 And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
 Their bells and florets of a thousand hues.
 Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
 Of shades and wanton winds and gushing brooks,
 On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
 Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes,
 That on the green turf suck the honied showers,
 And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
 Bring the rath primrose, that forsaken dies ;
 The tufted crowtoe, and pale jessamine ;
 The white pink, and the pansy freakt with jet ;
 The glowing violet ;

The musk rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
 With cowslips wan, that hang the pensive head,
 And every flower that sad embroidery wears.
 Bid amaranthus all his beauties shed,
 And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,
 To strow the laureat herse where Lycid lies.
 For so to interpose a little ease,
 Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.

* * *

Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more !
 For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
 Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.
 So sinks the day star in the ocean bed,
 And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
 And tricks his beams, and with new spangled ore
 Flames in the forehead of the morning sky ;
 So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
 Through the dear might of Him that walked the
 waves.

Where other flowers, and other streams along,
 With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
 And hears the inexpressive nuptial song
 In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love. .
 There entertain him all the saints above,
 In solemn troops and sweet societies,
 That sing, and singing in their glory move,
 And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes."

I write not for those who can read these verses without one corresponding emotion. Yet how few readers have I had the happiness to meet in the course of my life who can join in my admiration of this poem ! The "Paradise Lost," is in great measure beyond the reach of censure. Pretenders to judgment must abstain from indulging their malevolence against a poem, the fame of which is so

incontrovertibly established : But how often has it been my fortune to hear the “ Lycidas ” of Milton condemned, as unworthy of notice, by those who affected to relish and to comprehend the “ Paradise Lost ! ”

But thus it must ever be, when the rule so inimitably expressed by a well-known critic is not attended to. “ There is a sort of poetry, no doubt, as there is a sort of flowers, which can bear the broad sun and the ruffling winds of the world ; which thrive under the hands and eyes of indiscriminating multitudes, and please as much in hot and crowded saloons, as in their own sheltered repositories : but the finer and the purer sorts blossom only in

the shade, and give out their sweets but to those who seek them in the quiet and seclusion of the scenes which gave them birth. There are torrents and cascades, which attract the admiration of tittering parties, and of which even the busy must turn aside to catch a transient glance ; but the haunted stream steals through a still and a solitary landscape, and its beauties are never revealed but to him who strays in calm contemplation by its course, and follows its wanderings with undistracted and unimpatient admiration.”*

What is it that, from the earliest ages, has formed the “vital charm” of all poetry ? Certainly, as it has been maintained,

* Edinburgh Review, No. 27.

with his usual eloquence, by Sir Egerton Brydges, in the *Censura Literaria*, those descriptions of the scenery of Nature,—of the vicissitudes of the seasons, the sun and the moon, the tempest and the calm, which continue to awaken responsive feelings in every heart whose sensibilities have not been destroyed by the baneful influence of artificial society. But to those who have never lived within the sphere of simple enjoyments, the most exquisite poetry must ever prove the most insipid. Even in rural seclusion, how much is the worth of descriptive poems enhanced by reading them at those particular seasons of the year to which they refer! How often have I grieved to observe the sickly and undisguised disgust, or faint and un-

willing praise, with which the gilded volumes, containing the divine strains of a Milton or a Thomson, are sometimes perused in a corner of the “saloon,” or ornamented boudoir, in the city !

The verses of Warton relate to scenery devoid of the poetic grandeur of the Scottish Highlands. The Cherwell and the Avon, dear as they must ever be to every cultivated mind, have less intrinsic claim to the notice of the bard, than the haunted *Cona*, and the torrent that furrows the stupendous rocks of Ben-Cruachan. But it was one of my singularities, although acquainted with the Celtic language, and surrounded by Highland bards and seers, to have my first poetic feelings awakened

by *English* poetry, and delineations of *English* landscape.—The following description of evening was my favourite passage in T. Warton :

“ Oft when thy season, sweetest queen,
Has dressed the groves in livery green ;
When, in each fair and fertile field,
Beauty begins her bower to build ;
While Evening, veil'd in shadows brown,
Puts her matron mantle on,
And mists in spreading steams convey
More fresh the fumes of new-shorn hay ;
Then, Goddess ! guide my pilgrim feet
Contemplation hoar to meet,
As slow he winds, in museful mood,
Near the rush'd marge of Cherwell's flood ;
Or o'er old Avon's magic edge,
Where Shakspeare cull'd the spiky sedge,
All playful yet in years unripe,
To frame a shrill and simple pipe.

There, through the dusk but dimly seen,
Sweet evening objects intervene.

His wattled cotes the shepherd plants,
Beneath her elm the milk-maid chaunts ;
The woodman, speeding home, awhile
Rests him at a shady stile.

Nor wants there fragrance to dispense
Refreshment o'er my soothed sense ;
Nor tangled woodbine's balmy bloom,
Nor grass besprent to breathe perfume ;
Nor lurking wild thyme's spicy sweet,
To bathe in dew my roving feet.

Nor wants there note of Philomel,
Nor sound of distant tinkling bell ;
Nor lowings faint of herds remote,
Nor mastiff's bark from bosom'd cot.

Rustle the breezes lightly borne
O'er deep-embattled ears of corn.

Round ancient elm, with humming noise,
Full loud the chaffer swarms rejoice.

Meantime, a thousand dyes invest
The ruby chambers of the west,

That all aslant the village tower
 A mild reflected radiance pour :
 While with the level streaming rays
 Far seen its arched windows blaze ;
 And the tall grove's green top is dight
 In russet tints and gleams of light ;
 So that the gay scene by degrees
 Bathes my blithe heart in ecstasies ;
 And Fancy to my ravish'd sight
 Pourtrays her kindred visions bright.
 At length the parting light subdues
 My soften'd soul to calmer views,
 And fainter shapes of pensive joy,
 As twilight dawns, my mind employ ;
 Till from the path I fondly stray
 In musings wrapt, nor heed the way ;
 Wandering through the landscape still,
 Till Melancholy has her fill ;
 And on each moss-wove border damp
 The glow-worm hangs her fairy lamp."

How delightful, as I repeated these lines a thousand times to the woods and caverns, to meet in reality every image and every charm which they described ! My temples were fanned by the western “ breezes that rustled over the deep-embattled corn.” My path was illuminated with lingering light from the “ ruby chambers of the west.” The “ mild radiance ” fell on the mouldering “ towers ” of Kilchurn or Dunstaffnage, and illuminated the grey rocks and purple heath of the mountain summit, after every object beneath was veiled in obscurity. My feelings were so keen, and my raptures so intense, that I despised sleep, and frequently continued to wander, regardless of the midnight hour, till I again beheld

the morning dawn, and repeated with
ecstasy those inimitable lines of Milton,
beginning,

“These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty ! thine this universal frame,” &c.

On the eastern sky, I beheld the ruddy
blush of morning, while, in the south, the
moon appeared not yet wholly deprived
of her pale splendour, with the last soli-
tary star her companion. With what
ecstasy I then repeated,

“Fairest of stars, last in the train of night,
If better thou belong not to the dawn,
Sure pledge of day ! that crown’st the smiling
morn

With thy bright circlet, praise Him in thy sphere,
While day arises, that sweet hour of prime !”

When I looked round on the scenery
of the morning, how often have I kneel-
ed and wept as I pronounced,

“ Ye mists and exhalations, that now rise
From hill or steaming lake, dusky or grey,
Till the sun paints your fleecy skirts with gold,
In honour to the world’s great Author, rise ;
Whether to deck with clouds the uncolour’d sky,
Or wet the thirsty earth with falling showers,
Rising or falling, still advance his praise !”

Or as I met the morning gale, and look-
ed up to the pine-clad summits of the
mountain,

“ His praise, ye winds, that from four quarters blow,
Breathe soft or loud, and wave your tops, ye pines,
With every plant, in sign of worship, wave !”

Thus did I become irrecoverably a votary of Nature and the Muse. But I had other raptures awaiting me. These were but my first gleams of inspiration.

At this period, the verses which I wrote were feeble, and without originality. I endeavoured chiefly to imitate the poetry of Warton and of Collins ; but without success in either. At this moment I remember a few short fragments, which are perhaps all that remain in existence of my verses at that period, for I thought not of preserving my productions.

TWILIGHT.

1.

Now shuts the bell of cuckoo flower,
 While softly fall the fragrant dews ;
 And sweetly, from his leafy bower,
 The merle * his vesper song renews.

Fair Twilight and her silvery star
 Rest on the northern hills afar,
 And the hues that tinge that evening sky
 Wake in my heart strange ecstasy.

2.

How dear to me this tranquil hour !
 How sweet the breath of closing flower !
 When heavenly tones are heard ascending,
 Oft with the mountain breezes blending,
 And oft unnumber'd trains arise
 Of forms unseen by common eyes !

* * *

* The blackbird.

My poetic attempts never displayed any variety of ideas. They were almost always written at the same hour of evening, and merely satisfied my desire of arresting in some measure my feelings of admiration and delight. Thus the same sensations are again expressed in the following stanzas :

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3.

Oh come, ye beckoning trains, that love
 To hover in the gale of even ;
 That oft, amid the dusky grove,
 To me unearthly joy have given !

4.

And come, ye mystic trains, that float
 Along the river's winding way,
 Or mingling with the woodlark's note,
 With rapture hail the parting ray !

5.

Ye nameless shapes, that oft are seen
 To sail along the frowning steep,
 Through which, at solemn hour serene,
 The winds with hollow murmur sweep !

6.

—By these inspired, oh let me stray
 Through the dark forest's deepest gloom,
 Where the wild tints of dying day
 Even now the trembling leaves illumine.

7.

Environ'd thus with shadowy bliss,
 Be mine a wild-flower wreath to wind :
 The "mind" the poet's "kingdom is,"
 A "kingdom" wide and unconfined.

But enough of these infantine dreams
 of poetry. I was destined ere long to ac-

quire new ideas, and new principles of thought and action.—It was not till I had in great measure forsaken the works of modern English poets, and addicted myself to the lofty and peculiar poetry of the Highlanders, that I acquired any portion of what little strength and originality of character I may since have discovered. To this, I added a passion that daily increased for the works of the earlier English authors, with which I have already hinted that the family library was stored. But indeed it was not till a distant era, when I read some of the first productions of Scott, the “Glenfinlas” and “Eve of St John,” that I became inspired with the enthusiastic and unquenchable desire of becoming myself a poet, and of acquiring

literary glory. At the very early period, however, already described, there was insensibly formed within my mind an inseparable connection between the intellectual and material world ; a perpetual association of all my ideas and actions, with some aspect of the sky, and some favourite track of mountain scenery. I could not then pause to look narrowly into my own mind, nor was I skilled enough to comprehend its peculiar situation. To those deeply-rooted associations, however, to those indissoluble ties which arose within me, are unquestionably owing the most prominent features of my subsequent character. To this moment, their influence is as perceptible and predominant as ever.

It was not merely the modern poetry of my own choice that I perused in my rambles through the woods. I carried thither many of the Greek and Roman classics, that were prescribed to me by my tutor ; and I now feel, that, while I can no longer recall the beauties of those authors, which I perused only in his presence, those which were my associates in the fields and groves, and which I used to read aloud to the dashing water-fall, are vividly imprinted on my remembrance. But this turn of mind has been followed by consequences more important and more singular. I know that it has been the origin of my future woes and disappointments. All my ideas were derived from, and associated with, the features of the

sublime scenery around me. This, with the assistance of novels, romances, and poetry, led me to form a false and too flattering estimate of human life. All the blissful visions, which poets impute to the period of youth and innocence, were by me realized. Even now I cannot without emotion reflect on the unmixed happiness which I then enjoyed. Notwithstanding my passion for retirement, I cannot, when talking of a country life, use the words of Cowper :

“ I never framed a wish, nor formed a plan
That flatter'd me with hopes of earthly bliss,
But here I laid the scene ;”

for, having been told that it was most commendable to follow some profession,

I conquered in idea every obstacle, and established my abode in cities, amid the "hum of men," with as little difficulty as I had before entered the court of the fairy queen, or quaffed ale along with warriors in the hall of Odin. The pictures that I drew of future employment and distinction were illuminated by a "sort of purple light." Every obstacle to success; every cause for apprehension, disappointment, and disgust, were concealed from observation; for indeed of such obstacles I had not framed even a distant idea. As my mind gradually obtained some degree of vigour; and, more particularly, as soon as I became addicted to the perusal of black-letter chronicles, and the study of Gaelic poetry and legend, I delighted to

conquer in imagination those evils of life with which books had made me acquainted. They fled before my invincible prowess, like the morning mist from the sunbeams. I had yet to learn, that the most depressing evils which await a feeling and unsophisticated mind, on its first intercourse with the world, far less frequently arise from the blows of adversity, and the vicissitudes of fortune, than from certain undefined sensations of disappointment and disgust, which in the rude intercourse of ordinary society must ever assail an individual who lives under the influence of that *mimosa* sensibility, produced by seclusion and a poetic imagination. I knew not that, though surrounded by multitudes, I should feel myself in solitude,—

but in a solitude where no longer mountains, forests, and rivers, or songs of birds, or calmness and peace, awoke imagery of rapture,—where I felt myself indeed alone, because I met not with one congenial mind, and was agonized by disappointment, and overpowered by disgust, at the folly and wickedness that seemed every where to surround me. I had yet to learn in how little estimation the dignity of the literary character is held by those who act their parts in the great world, and are busied in the pursuits of ordinary ambition.—In thus alluding to the influence acquired over my mind by the scenery of Nature, I cannot help applying to myself the words of the poet ;

" Though absent long,
 Those forms of beauty have not been to me
 As is a landscape to a blind man's eye :
 But oft, in lonely rooms, amid the din
 Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
 In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
 Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,
 And passing even into my purer mind
 With tranquil restoration.

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" If this
 Be but a vain belief, yet oh how oft,
 In darkness, and amid the many shapes
 Of joyless daylight, when the fretful stir
 Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
 Have hung upon the beatings of my heart ;
 How oft in spirit have I turn'd to thee,
 Oh sylvan Wye ! thou wanderer through the woods,
 How often has my spirit turn'd to thee !"

Wordsworth.

CHAPTER II.

Oh there's nothing half so sweet in life
As love's young dream !

Moore.

IT was in the month of April, in my seventeenth year, that my father proposed to carry me through England, and afterwards to take advantage of the recent peace with France, for it was in the year 1802, to exhibit to me the wonders of the continent. This was a memorable era in my life. Notwithstanding all my juvenile anticipations of pleasure from such an excursion, I deeply regretted to leave home. Those who have never lived amid moun-

tains and forests, cannot form an idea of the beauties of the month of April. There is a diversity, a perpetual variety in the scenery of this month, which were peculiarly delightful to one of my disposition.

“ See, in the rear of the warm sunny shower,
The visionary boy from shelter fly !”

I had now become identified with the hero of Beattie’s inimitable poem. But I knew not the magic of that enchanter, who was afterwards to become my idol, and whose verses, applied to this month, are so beautiful, that they cannot be too often repeated :

“ Like April morning clouds, that pass
With varying shadow o’er the grass,

And imitate on field and furrow

Life's chequer'd scene of joy and sorrow."

But I had now derived associations sufficient from the poetry of Thomson and Brydges, and Beattie and Burns, to love the rainbow and the shower, the floating cloud that rode on the wind, and to watch with enthusiastic rapture the new-born glories of the fragrant woods and enamelled vales.

Oh there were dark glens, in which the haunted streams murmured through moss-grown trunks of fantastic oaks, into which the shepherd feared to enter ; for they were the abodes of the *Daoine Shich* and the *Ourisk*. In those glens I had my

hours of secret and unutterable enjoyment. *There* bloomed already the snow-white anemone, the saxefrage, and the cuckoo-flower. I thought on the spring tides that were past,—never to return. Oh how I envied the shepherd and his flock, and the grey-haired piper and the visionary bard, that were not to accompany us !—But such details are trite, and such feelings are, in a greater or less degree, common to every young person leaving home for the first time.

After I had entered my father's carriage, I sighed to think that I could no longer enjoy the mountains and woods and rivers. I was carried through them on the rough road of a rude and unculti-

vated country. I saw the light and shadow varying on the hills, and the partial gleams dancing on the waves of Loch Ow, as we passed through the cavernous and gloomy approach to that magnificent lake. I leaned out of the carriage, and caught the cool breeze that swept over the surface of the water, and sighed heavily to think that my freedom was gone—that I had no longer the power of wandering, “free as the mountain wind,” over the heath and through the forest. A settled gloom gradually usurped the place of all my fairy visions. Travelling, even to the rich, is seldom pleasant in Scotland. To me it was insufferable. Under the influence of the most frightful melancholy, I arrived at Edinburgh. Here the scenes

were changed. For once my expectations were exceeded. The charms of that city are peculiar. It has the romantic wildness of uncultivated Nature, blended with magnificent buildings and the elegance of polished life.

We remained two days at Edinburgh, during which my gloom was in great measure overcome. We visited the theatre, where Mrs Siddons played Lady Macbeth. This astonishing exhibition operated on my feelings with the most oppressive vehemence. I was again in a world of enchantment ; but how different from that which I had quitted ! It is to be observed, that we travelled only in search of amusement. It was impossible for me to escape

the gloomy impressions of the journey. But now these were forgotten ; and the disgusting realities of life, which have since had such an influence, were sedulously concealed from view. We had not any thing to do with the grievances of a city life ; with the wickedness, the folly, and the coarseness of ordinary society. We were in search of pleasing impressions, and now began to experience them.

My father felt with the nonchalance of one who had been accustomed to varieties of life. He could no longer experience surprise and astonishment. He moved calmly through the sphere that had been familiar to him.

We set off from Edinburgh with spirit-

ed horses. Our retinue was large. We had two carriages, and now travelled with ease and rapidity.

“ My old remembrances fled from me wholly.”

Travelling in England is not an evil. I could not but participate in those sensations of pleasure, which every one experiences in rapidity of motion, through a civilized and beautiful country, where all is activity, cheerfulness, and prosperity. The perpetual change of objects, and the novelty of all, struck forcibly on my fancy. My delight was great. Our mode, in which I was to “ see the world,” was exactly that which was best suited to produce false and exaggerated views of life ;

and without affording opportunity for the study of characters and manners, or indeed for reality of any kind, should only serve to produce a tumultuous and confused and harassing sense of pleasure, not unmingled with regret ; and afterwards, as in due time it appeared, to add fuel to the flame of a powerful imagination, which represented the world as a paradise of unmixed delight, and filled with objects for perpetual admiration.

Our mode of travelling also increased, to an almost incredible degree, that romantic turn of mind which induced me to consider myself born only for the most splendid achievements and elevated pleasures,—a self-sufficiency and fantastic

pride, which are almost inevitably acquired by every youthful recluse, and are not easily banished even by intercourse with the world. But our journey afforded not any opportunity for such intercourse. I was *alter et idem*. I had lost in our tumultuous progress my former feelings ; but I still continued to move in a world of my own, and unrestrained imagination revelled in a thousand chimeras. By the time we approached London, I fancied myself an experienced traveller,—almost a hero,—for having rolled through a long track of fine country, in a luxurious equipage, drawn by four horses. Such were the childish dreams of a young man, whose experience was almost infantine.

Whoever should expect from me a delineation of the scenes through which I passed, or even of my own emotions and ideas during our travels, would be disappointed. The first has been frequently done by other tourists. I am not writing a book of travels, but a few hurried and imperfect sketches of my own mind. During my residence at London and at Paris, my faculties were too much disordered, and my enjoyments too tumultuous, to leave any distinct and permanent impression. The time allotted for our travels was too short to enable one of my age and temperament to form any fixed associations, and principles of action, in place of those which I had lost. The perpetual changes harassed and distracted my per-

ceptions ; and my character, as yet devoid of stability and decision, changed rapidly from one extreme to another, as different amusements and objects presented themselves.

By one of those strange inconsistencies, the cause of which cannot be easily assigned, I, who loved the Highlands of Scotland beyond all other countries in the world, was yet much enchanted with France ; and while all the wonders of Paris courted my admiration, I was yet most pleased with the recollection of the vine-covered cottages, and the perpetual cheerfulness of its rural inhabitants. I remember once, owing to an accident which befell our travelling equipage, we

entered for a short time the residence of a retired villager. For many months afterwards, the charms of his habitation, the elegance of our repast, and the courtesy of our host, whose countenance I yet behold as he presented his snuff-box to my father, and yet more the beauty of his daughter, were constantly recurring to my remembrance.

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Harassed by cares, and debilitated as I now am, I have yet a remembrance sufficiently clear of my delight at our returning once more to Argyleshire in the end of autumn. I yet remember the sweet stillness of the mountain air, and the odour

of the fading leaves in the forest, as our carriage slowly advanced along the hollow and echoing road that wound under impending precipices, when we approached once more the beloved shores of Loch Ow. I remember with what ecstasy I hailed its waters gleaming through the haze of autumn ; with what exquisite emotions I greeted its wooded isles and mouldering ruins, the region of superstition, poetry, and enchantment. Oh there is no patriotism like that of the Highlander ! Admiration the most passionate of the deeds and glory of his ancestors ; devotion the most ardent to poetry, music, and superstition ; the charms of inexhaustible legend, where varied stores have been preserved unimpaired from the most

distant ages,—these are the foundation of his national enthusiasm ; and when these are inseparably combined and associated in the mind with the rocks and ruins and lakes,—with the breezes of his native mountain, and the roar of its cataracts,—how fervent is his affection !

I remember with what joy I heard again the solitary cry of the falcon from the remote summit of the cliff, and saw the partial gleams of magic light peculiar to autumn resting on the caverned recesses and wooded steeps of Ben Cruachan. Then mine eye traced them as they fell on distant portions of the beautiful lake, and illuminated afar its opposite shores ; and, above all, how delightful to watch these

enchancing rays shedding their tranquil glories on the hoary ruins of Kilchurn, and on the rocks and wild copsewood of the numerous islands ! But the variegated hues of the tangled thickets,—their soothing yet melancholy odour,—who shall describe them to those who never felt their exquisite influence ! and to those who have known them, many words are superfluous. How brightly glowing the hues of the hazel, stretching forth its fantastic arms from every broken precipice ; mingling with the birch, now almost deprived of its leaves, and with the yellow leaves of the oak, that remain till December, and the red foliage of the beech, that defies the keenest frost and strongest gale ; mingling too with the glossy fruits of va-

rious hues profusely planted by the hand of Nature, and with the lingering flowers of summer, the spiry hypericum and never-fading heath-bell ! When we approached once more the centre of my father's domain,—when I beheld the well-known scenes, where every object revived the most enchanting associations,—when I heard the red-breast sing on the well-known trees, and saw the wild deer sporting on the wooded waste and the sunbeams resting on my favourite cavern, and heard the well-known roar of the water-fall, at once all my long-lost visions revived, and, bursting into tears, I was overwhelmed by a tide of uncontrollable rapture—too exquisite to last.

The pomp of feudal times had not altogether deserted my father's mansion. Our domestics crowded into the court to receive us. My father retired for a few minutes with his old and confidential steward, who had desired a conference. After running for an instant into the library, only to cast a glance on the scene of my former hours of study and enjoyment, I betook myself to the summit of a neighbouring rock, from which I gazed on the distant expanse of ocean, and hailed from afar the venerable walls of Dunstaffnage Castle, whitened by the sun-beams, now streaming almost level with the horizon.

My tutor had, to my regret, been left at Paris. He told my father, that, by

means of my own attachment to literature, my progress would be insured without his attendance ; and, having formed engagements at Paris which he seemed unwilling to break, my father had acquiesced, with the promise, however, of a visit from him within a year. I was thus in great measure left to the management of my own time and pursuits, which led to various extravagancies.

Of the next three months there are not many traces now left on my remembrance. Autumn was soon past ; and winter happened that year to commence very early. I loved winter. I well remember, on her dark and louring days, to have pursued my forest rambles with

more than ordinary earnestness. The fading verdure, the grey and watery sky, the gloomy heath, and the lake, whose waters reflected the darkness of the sky, were dear to me. Of the many singular caverns which are found in the mountains of Argyleshire, there was one which had long before become my favourite retreat. A flight of steps, if steps they might be called, which could only be ascended by grasping the hazel, the dwarf-birch, and the fern, led to a small and concealed entrance of the cave, known only to myself and one or two shepherds. In winter, by a singular operation of Nature, the great entrance, which appeared in the front of the cliff, and which, to an ordinary observer, seemed the only one,

was frequently rendered impassable alike to the foot of man, and that of the wildest mountain quadruped, by a cataract of stupendous height and uncontrollable fury, to the roar of whose waters I delighted to listen. Every cave, every lake, every stream, almost every withered tree in the Scottish Highlands, is connected, in the minds of the natives, with some legendary tale. This was known simply as King Robert's Cave, as it had afforded to him a shelter before the battle of Ben Cruachan and the taking of Dunstaffnage. Frequently I meditated on the character and splendid achievements of that hero ; but more frequently remained lost in reverie,—a state in which ideas pass dimly and indistinctly over the mind, producing

exquisite enjoyment, but vanishing almost as soon as they arise, without leaving a trace behind.

My father's health had not been improved, but rather impaired, by our rapid tour; and his illness cast a gloom over the pleasures of the winter. The return of spring renovated his health and my lofty hopes. A new era in my life was about to commence,—a transitory era of enchantment, which all the influence of succeeding misfortunes cannot force me to contemplate with coldness.

In describing our return, I ought to have mentioned a circumstance which made a strong impression on my fancy.

There was a beautiful spot on the shores of Loch Ow, distinguished by the ruins of a small monastic building ; and as it was easy of access by a winding path, my father, though it was not included in his own property, had often visited it, and pointed it out to me as an enchanting situation for a sheal or hunting seat. On our passing this favourite spot on our return, we were much surprised to see a beautiful modern building reared, as if by enchantment, and in which the mouldering arches of the monastery had, with the best characteristics of modern taste, been preserved and incorporated with the new structure, which was Gothic, and intended to be a representation of what the monastery had been in its original state.

Such an attempt had excited no little wonder and applause in our neighbourhood. The scientific skill of the workmen had, in the short space of one season, produced a magical effect. Already were the interior decorations in forwardness. Large fires had been employed to dry the walls; and now the painted glass for the case-ments, and ornaments of the apartments had arrived, and were to be arranged during the winter.

With a fancy always ready to be excited by every thing new and splendid, especially by what flattered my love of antiquity and all my favourite opinions, I soon pictured to myself a character of the most magical fascination for the inhabi-

tant of such a mansion ; and in a short time believed, that *here* must be realized all that I had read or dreamed of the painted bowers of romance, the temples and grottos of Elysian gardens. When I was told that the author of these wonderful changes was a young and beautiful female of high rank, I immediately drew a portrait, illuminated with all the brightest hues that gild the visions of the poet “on summer eve by haunted stream.”

As the spring advanced, these thoughts acquired new force and colouring. The neighbourhood were in stupid amazement at the accounts which were circulated of the singular decorations of this abode, and the still more wonderful fascinations

of its owner, who was expected to visit the Priory on the following summer. Increased by reading, my passion for poetry now acquired a full ascendancy. My friend, the French priest, was no longer present to interrupt that course of reading which I had chosen for myself. Black-letter chronicles and romances, with all the English poetry and novels that I could discover, were my favourites. About this time, when I began to awaken from my state of comparative lethargy, I wrote many verses. The following poor fragment is all I can at present call to mind :

* * *

Like the pale maniac, on whose wilder'd brain
 The light of joy and reason breaks anew,
 Who hears affection's voice, and breathes again
 Spring's balmy gale, wafted the forest through,

Each flower beloved in youth I fondly greet ;
 Drink the fresh spirit of the yellow broom ;
 The hoary hawthorn's rising fragrance meet,
 And watch the gleams of morn the groves illumine.

—Here shall I tread again the flowery maze,
 And eager hail the wonders of romance ;
 Perchance, ere yet the twilight of my days,
 On me the Muse may cast a favouring glance.

I would not like those early blossoms fade,
 That now, alas ! on yonder bough expire ;
 Or like the daffodils, recline the head,
 Nor leave one living record of the lyre.

My imagination was now perpetually
 fed by the reports circulated through the
 country, of the splendid ornaments of the
 Priory Cottage, and the wonderful cha-
 racter of her who was to reside in it.

Curiosity is not the prevailing characteristic of Highlanders ; yet there were some individuals who circulated the news of the arrival of almost every picture, and attempted to describe the scenery of each apartment ;—I may well say attempted to describe,—for no one understood what he talked of. Nor could I boast of the skill of a connoisseur ; but my fancy, on those meagre and bungling outlines, formed pictures of the most exquisite beauty. At first, the vision that I had framed of the mighty enchantress of these magic decorations, though beautiful, was inaccurately defined ; and while I strove to detain it, it melted from my gaze like the morning cloud. By degrees, however, it became distinct and vivid. My walks were no

longer lonely. I had wished for some one to participate with me the raptures I enjoyed. My object was attained. I fled to the woods and rivers to meet a companion, who shared with me their beauty and their rapturous influence. Amid the fading glow of twilight, when the white vapours rose from the lake, and hung on the forest, from whose foliage distilled the rich balmy fragrance of summer eve, her form was exquisitely lovely. Her voice was sweeter than the notes of the black-bird and woodlark. I wandered all night through beneath the high cliffs, on which, even at midnight hour, rested the lingering tints of twilight, listening to her tones as they floated on the perfumed gales, and watching the purple light of morn as it

reddened the grey summit of the cliff. I became an enthusiastic lover.

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It was on a fine summer evening, in the month of June, that I had gone to contemplate the twilight on the banks of Loch Ow. White vapours already rolled on the lake, through which were seen the fantastic shapes of the wooded and rocky islands, by that medium rendered more wild and gigantic. The balmy influence of a thousand blended odours, distilled from the mountain flowers, and from the boundless forests of weeping birch, (which every where covered those islands and the neighbouring mountains, dipping their

long ringlets into the water, and waving with every zephyr,) was exquisitely delightful. On every side, the thrush and blackbird vied in waking the song of ecstasy. On the venerable ruins of Kilchurn, overhung by rocks, had descended the dark shadows of night ; but in the western skies yet lingered hues of unutterable glory. The mountain summits, gay with the purple heath-bell, shone with a double red ; and through a break in the cliffs streamed a long line of purple light, gradually softening into amber on the wide waters of the lake. The scenery and the season were such as are described in the following stanza ;—and if there lives a reader who can peruse that stanza with apathy, defend me from his society ! and

may he have wisdom enough to shut my book, and throw it, if he pleases, into the fire ! His disapprobation will be welcome.

“ Harp of the North, farewell ! The hills grow dark,
 On purple peaks a deeper shade descending ;
 In twilight copse the glow-worm lights her spark ;
 The deer, half seen, are to the covert wending,
 Resume thy wizard elm, the fountain lending,
 And the wild breeze, thy wilder minstrelsy—
 Thy numbers sweet with Nature’s vespers blending,
 With distant echoes from the fold and lea,
 The herd boy’s evening pipe, and hum of housing
 bee.”

While I watched this lovely scene, a voice sweeter than those of the woodland songsters was heard, like the effect of enchantment, from the grey and dusky ruins.

The music was such as I had never before heard, except once, when, during our travels, we attended an opera in London ; and not even then did I hear any thing equal to this. Here it seemed the thrilling complaints of an exquisite soul fraught with sensibility, pouring forth tones of the most melancholy sweetness. Entranced, breathless I listened, not daring to move till the strain had ceased. It was past, and the last mournful vibration of an accompanying harp had died in the gale, when I rushed forward to the ruins to investigate the cause of this phenomenon ; for I had little doubt that the music was unearthly. Like the shepherd in Milton, I said,

“ Can any mortal creature of earth’s mould
Breathe such enchanting, divine ravishment ?”

There was a boat fastened to a tree. I cut the cord, and rowed myself to the small island of Kilchurn. When I entered the Gothic arch of the outer gateway, all was hushed, and I hasted on through the mouldering apartments, but found no one. As I looked through a loop-hole in the opposite side of the building, I caught a transient glance of a figure floating amid the groves, along a sort of terrace, on the rocky shore of the lake ; and I then knew the music had been in such a manner reverberated from the cliffs, that it had only appeared to proceed

from the ruins, but had in reality arisen from the main land. I returned instantly ; lodged the boat on a bank of sand ; and when I ascended the terrace, I was met by a form of the most exquisite grace and loveliness, followed by another female bearing a harp. At once I was struck by the conviction that this was Lady L—— ; and as the glow of evening, that yet lingered on the scenes, revealed her illuminated countenance, which the painter might have copied as a model of beauty, beheld for an instant the fire that glittered in her eye, and the seraphic smile that played on her lips. I felt that all my anticipations were realized, my wildest visions converted into reality.—She was gone,—but the balmy air had gained new fragrance from her

presence ;—the scenes were illuminated with new light ;—I gazed on a “ new heaven and a new earth.” I threw myself on the ground, and burst into a passion of tears.

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To my inexpressible grief and mortification, I soon after heard that Lady L—— had left the Priory, and set out on a tour to the English lakes. It was understood that she had found the plan and decorations of her new residence insufficient, and had given orders for farther improvements.

CHAP. III.

Oh, Nature ! how in every charm supreme !

Whose votaries feast on raptures ever new !

Beattie.

IN the month of July a new turn was given to my pursuits, by the perusal of Walter Scott's " Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," just then published. With what exquisite pleasure I contemplated this production, let those only attempt to conceive who have felt in their fullest extent the powers of genuine poetry. How many hours of rapture have I spent in merely gazing on the frontispiece

of the first volume, which I compared with the towers of Kilchurn, Dunstaffnage, and more especially with an old ruin in our neighbourhood, still wilder, if possible, than either of these, while I recalled the exquisite beauty of the poetry. The “Eve of St John” rendered me a votary of the most gloomy superstition. I was horror-struck; yet the witchery of poetic spells obliged me to peruse the ballad over and over again, till every line was indelibly fixed in the memory. But what words can describe my ecstasy on the perusal of “Glenfinlas!” A new train of thoughts, a new species of pursuit, now invited my attention, and roused my whole faculties. I woke as from a dream. I had lived in the land of song,

in the region of enchantment, and yet had not cultivated its legendary treasures, and the inestimable remains of its poetry.

New splendours seemed to invest every object. The features of every scene assumed new and more interesting forms. Few persons are aware of the inexhaustible stores of amusement and information to be derived from the legendary tales of the Highlanders and the remnants of their poetry. I resolved to devote myself to this pursuit, and I spent the remainder of summer in the most delightful paroxysm of poetic enthusiasm. I did not, however, lose my fondness for old English literature ; and finding, from one of the narratives with which I was supplied by

a venerable bard, that an old ruin in our vicinity had been built by a lady, when her husband, one of my ancestors, was engaged in the Crusades, with what ecstasy did I peruse every chronicle and romance relating to the period of those achievements, attaching myself chiefly to the character of the immortal Richard, on whose adventures I meditated for whole days, shaded from the heat of the sun by the mouldering walls of the ruin !

The summer season in the Highland vallies is always very sultry ; so that I was precluded for some time from making long excursions. But on the arrival of autumn, when the mild chearfulness of all Nature awoke new energies, and gave

strength to passion, I resolved that I would visit the scenery described in the ballad of "Glenfinlas."

In no country can the beauties of that most enchanting of all seasons be contemplated to such advantage as in the Highlands of Scotland. The canopy of her boundless forests, variegated with ten thousand hues, and extended over the rocky sides of the mountain and island, presents the most exquisite charms to the painter and poet. There is something inexpressibly awful added to the deep stillness peculiar to the season by the majestic grandeur of rocks and precipices, from whose aerial summits, inaccessible to the foot of man, is heard the solitary

voice of the falcon ; the recollection of whose note never fails to recall scenery of the most desolate grandeur. No earthly intruder can here interrupt the freedom of solitary contemplation. The poet is left alone with God and Nature ; and while from the summit of the cliff he surveys the wide expanse of the lowlands, the lakes glittering in the sun, the “ hamlets grey, and dim-discovered spires,” the meandering streams glancing through the dark coverts of the forest, he feels, in all its purity and force, the truth of the sentiment, that in such a country mere existence is ecstasy ; and that he who possesses the means of preserving life and health, has little else to wish for.

" I care not, Fortune, what you me deny :
 You cannot rob me of free Nature's grace ;
 You cannot shut the windows of the sky,
 Through which Aurora shews her brightening
 face ;
 You cannot bar my constant feet to trace
 The woods and lawns by living streams at eve.
 Let health my nerves and finer fibres brace,
 And I their toys to the great children leave ;
 Of Fancy, Reason, Virtue, nought can me bereave."

Animated by these sentiments, inspired
 by the magic influence of autumn, and
 the new ideas gleaned from the poetry of
 Scott, I absented myself a week from my
 native forests, to visit the track of scenery
 described in " Glenfinlas," and which
 has since been celebrated in the " Lady
 of the Lake."

Passing through Strathfillan, I paused for some time on the romantic shores of Loch Dochart, admiring the lake and its mouldering fortress. The magnificence and variety of Loch Erne excited keen emotions ;—but to one who has been accustomed to the matchless and awful enchantments of Loch Ow, almost all other scenery becomes tame in comparison.

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Having quitted Loch Erne head before day-break, I proceeded to Loch Lubnaig. When I came within sight of the lake, the white mists of morning were yet lingering on its waters, and were rolled in beautiful wreaths round the rocky sum-

mit of Ben Ledi. The redbreast alone broke the deep stillness, as he carolled blithely on the boughs of the weeping birch his matin song,—and his notes awoke in my breast long-lost feelings of unutterable joy ; for I thought on the sunny days when I first learned to love the beauties of autumn. Sometimes, indeed, the scream of the bittern and the falcon deepened the solemnity of the stillness, and added by their contrast to the sweetness of the redbreast's song.

As I advanced, the red light of morning began to gleam through the white fogs that rolled through Strath-Ire ; and as I reached the chapel of St Bride, the brightening tints shone on the rocky ca-

verns and lofty peaks of Ben Ledi ; and, looking back, I saw them redden the stupendous forehead of Craigna-coheilg. The still air of an autumnal morn was impregnated with the most exquisite odours from the birch trees, that “ waved and wept ” on the round hill above the chapel, of which celebrated sanctuary only the walls now remain. A few cottages, beautifully situated, attracted my attention, and, having walked the whole length of Loch Lubnaig, which is nearly five miles, I entered one of them as soon as the smoke from the chimney apprized me that the family were awake. I was fortunate in my choice of the cottage ; for it was the residence of a bard.

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Impatient to proceed, I left the old man's cottage, and entered the Pass of Lennie. The tranquil glories of an autumnal sun now shed their most inspiring influence over the scenes. I was not one of the cold-hearted, who can meet such an influence without emotion, who can waste the autumn day, which ought to be sacred to heavenly contemplation, in the trivial and unfeeling pursuits of the sportsman. As I met one or two individuals of this class, I remembered some lines that I had written in my first years of poetic enjoyment.

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There are who view the rising morn
 With purple ray the hills adorn ;
 There are who mark the glow of heaven,
 And all the enchanting gleams of even ;
 And yet, alas ! no transport meet,
 No rapture in the scenery sweet.
 But thou * hast taught me to descry
 In every path new ecstasy ;
 There seems a visionary light
 Thrown on each object of my sight.
 In every summer breath that blows,
 The tide of inspiration flows ;
 The flocks and waving pastures fair,
 That wanton in the vernal air ;
 The village spire but dimly seen,
 With many a shadowy grove between ;
 The trembling tints of dying day,
 That on the river's bosom play ;

* Addressed "to the Muse."

The mists of night, that slowly sail
 Through the damp wood and lowly vale ;—
 All wake for me enchantments new,
 That meet no other mortal's view.

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But all remembrances, and indeed all
 distinct ideas of every kind, were lost in
 rapture as I reached the middle of the
 pass, where stupendous cliffs covered with
 wood almost closed together,

Till, as shut out from all the world
 By rocks in wild disorder hurl'd,
 The chasm's rough jaws at length appear
 Like an impregnable barrier.

As I heard the roar of the cataract,
 and saw the white spray glittering in the

sun, and traced the windings of the river as it rolled on through the Moor of Bochastle, and was seen at a distance of even thirty miles gleaming in the distant landscape, through which the eye delighted to wander, and marked afar the embattled rocks of Stirling, and the Mountain Dunmyat dwindled to an inconsiderable eminence, my rapture became ungovernable and oppressive. I had all my life lived in the midst of magnificent scenery ; yet it seemed as if now for the first time I had become truly awake to poetic impulse. I determined to curb my impatience to visit Glenfinlas and Loch Katrine, and to husband the pleasures that were before me. I therefore spent the whole day in the Pass of Lennie.

I descended to the bed of the river, and looked up at the cataract. Lost in a delirium of pleasure, I took no note of time. I plucked autumnal flowers from the clefts of the rock, and wove them into garlands. I ascended the caverns and glens in the front of Ben Ledi. I would have even attempted to reach the summit ; but I feared lest an exhaustion of bodily strength should deprive me of the mental energy I so much wished to cherish. When the glories of the sun, now approaching the horizon, warned me that the day was near a close, I proceeded on my way to Callander, which I did not reach till sunset.

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The beauty of the next morning being most inviting, I resolved to visit the Bridge of Bracklynn ; and at an early hour, before the white vapours had dispersed, I ascended the Craig of Callander. And here what a scene awaited me ! How exquisitely beautiful to see the varied landscape emerge through the mists of night, in all the “ dewy brilliance ” of an autumnal morn,—when frosts yet hang on the grass and on the yellow fading leaves, and the air has all the cool, tempered serenity that imparts its coolness to the fevered brow, and its serenity to an agitated mind ! Even at this moment, though I write in a state of extreme depression and weakness, the scene is vividly recalled to me.

“ It was the dawn of an autumn day !

The sun was struggling with frost-fog grey,

That like a silvery crape was spread

Round Glaramara’s distant head.” *

What ecstasy to trace the meanderings of the Teith through the plain of Bochasle,—through the ornamented grounds of the Camp,—through the pine-tree forests of Cambusmore !—to follow its silvery current, glittering in the sun’s dazzling sheen, till it washes the venerable and romantic walls of Doune Castle, and afar to mark the towered ramparts of Stirling, which reminded me of the first view I had enjoyed of Edinburgh the preceding year. “ Oh for the voice and fire

* Vision of Triermain.—See the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1809.

of seraphim," to preserve and impart the influence of such a scene! How forcibly it reminded me of Beattie's exquisite pictures, drawn, as I have since understood, from the summit of a bleak hill in Kincardineshire! *

* But to a true poet, fine scenery is not essential to excite the fire of his genius. Walter Scott has observed of himself,

" Though no broad river swept along
To claim perchance heroic song ;
Though sigh'd no groves in summer gale
To prompt of love a softer tale ;
Though scarce a puny streamlet's speed
Claim'd homage from a shepherd's reed ;
*Yet was poetic impulse given
By the green earth and clear blue heaven."*

And in the last melancholy letter which winds up that painfully affecting tragedy, Hayley's " Life

“ And oft the craggy cliff he loved to climb,
 When all in mist the world below was lost ;
 What dreadful pleasure there to stand sublime,
 Like shipwreck’d mariner on desert coast,
 And view the enormous waste of vapours tost
 In billows lengthening to the horizon round,
 Now scoop’d in gulphs, in mountains now emboss’d,
 And hear the voice of mirth and joy rebound,
 Flocks, herds, and water-falls, along the hoar profound !”

As I advanced, every step brought me
 into the presence of new charms, and
 awoke new ecstasy. I resigned myself to

of Cowper,” the poet observes,—“ The country
 that you have had in prospect has always been ad-
 mired for its beauties ; but the wretch who can de-
 rive no gratification from a view of Nature, even
 under the disadvantages of her most ordinary dress,
 will have no eye to admire her in any.”

delirium, and followed the foot-path that led across the heath, till the roar of the cataract made me look round, expecting to behold the streams that produced it : but they were yet invisible ; and I had to proceed for half a mile further, during which the sounds grew gradually louder, and raised my imagination to the highest pitch, ere I entered the deep and rugged ravine. I had seen many cataracts more worthy of admiration in Argyleshire ; but this did not prevent me from now feeling a degree of delight which I never before experienced.

I remember, after crossing the bridge, my attention was attracted by what I little expected to meet in such a solitude, at

this early hour,—a human figure. It was that of a young man, reclining on a wild promontory of the wooded cliff. His visage was agitated and forbidding; his whole appearance squalid and unpleasing. He seemed labouring under the keenest emotions, and cast wild looks on the scenery. Perceiving my approach, he started up, as if disgusted by the sight of a human being, and instantly disappeared. Following the path, I perceived, on the part of the bank which he had just quitted, a paper, containing the following lines, written with a pencil, and scarcely legible :

“ There was a time, when I have thought
I could not meet thy temper'd ray,

Fair autumn ! but, each care forgot,
 The gleams of joy would round me play.

There was a time, when every leaf
 That trembled on the rustling bough,
 Could chase the fleeting form of grief,
 And bid enchantments rise,—but *now*,

Behold me in these woods astray,
 While all the glow of morning skies
 Is gleaming on my lonely way,
 That through majestic scenery lies ;

With fever'd pulse, and tortured brain,
 Wearied and slow the path pursue,
 Where, gleaming on each grove and plain,
 Autumnal glories meet the view ;

And where, in Nature's genuine pride,
 Lakes dance, and foaming cataracts roar,
 And the high mountain's rocky side
 Is seen with moss and lichens hoar !

Oh, Nature! lovely as thou art,
 In "all thy varying shews and forms,"
 To me those scenes cannot impart
 The kindling gleam of joy that warms

Mine inmost heart, whene'er I view
 The shades where fled my youthful hours,
 And where, the peaceful woodlands through,
 North Esk his glittering current pours.

Then fled the days of infancy ;
 And every object calls to mind
 The days when it was ecstasy
 The heath-bell into wreaths to bind.

Full many a visionary sight
 Has charm'd my summer hours away ;
 And heavenly tones, at dead of night,
 Have raised on high the choral lay !

Those days have fled ; their dreams are o'er,
 Or lost in wild disorder lie,

Like the fall'n leaves that drive before
 The tempest of a wintry sky."

* * *

On returning to Callander, I found myself so much fatigued by the morning's excursion, that I determined not to proceed immediately to Loch Katrine. I wandered, therefore, through the beautiful environs of the village, visiting the Roman Camp and the Minister's Manse. To the latter, I had a letter of recommendation from my father, of which, however, I did not avail myself. As the sun again verged to the horizon, inspired by the loveliness of the weather, I ascended once more the hills above Callander, that I might enjoy the prospect at the corner of the

larch wood, mentioned in Dr Grahame's "Sketches descriptive of Scenery in Perthshire," and watch the light of an evening sun gleaming on the wide lake of Vennachar. The white haze, peculiar to the atmosphere in autumn, added to the glories of the scene. I remained for a long time lost in admiration, and anticipating the pleasures that invited me in my progress along its shores the following day.

Of all seasons of the year, the best for making long excursions certainly is that of autumn; for then the weather, that has once commenced fine, generally continues so for many weeks. Thus it happened in the present instance; and next

morning, ordering my horses, I proceeded through the forest of Coilehallan, on my way to Glenfinlas and Loch Katrine. I remembered that I was advancing to the land of enchantment which had given birth to Scott's inestimable ballad ; and though I had left, if possible, yet grander and more varied scenery in my native territory, yet the associations derived from genuine poetry rendered this still more interesting than the haunts of my youth. The season described by Mr Scott is that of summer ; but as I rode through the forest, and breathed the fresh odour of the fading leaves, and saw the dews of night yet resting on herb and flower, I was irresistibly led to repeat the beautiful stanza,—

“ Soft fell the night, the sky was calm,
When three successive days had flown ;
And summer mist in dewy balm
Steep'd heathy bank and mossy stone.”

Thus it happens that, to a poetic imagination, a single idea, or the most simple object, awakens a train of imagery. The dew of an autumnal morn led me to the contemplation of a moon-light landscape in a summer eve.

But all remembrances were lost in kindling rapture, when, emerging from the wood, and approaching the ford of Coileantogle, the glories of Loch Vennachar burst on my view. In the prospect now there was little or no wood ; but over the country was spread luxuriant

heath, from whose lingering flowers were exhaled sweet odours. The lake slept beneath the tranquil light of autumn. Not a breeze waved the mountain fern, that extended its “fingery leaves” from the clefts of the grey rock. The revelry of the reaper at this early hour had not begun, and not a voice interrupted the stillness. Calm and pure, the mountain air refreshed my burning temples. I thought of Lady L——. I thought how much she would have admired such a scene; and that probably she now enjoyed the sweet influence of autumn amid the English lakes. New raptures awaited me as I arrived at the beginning of the boundless forest that extends over all these regions of enchantment, so exqui-

sitely described in the “ Lady of the Lake.” I came within sight of Loch Achray. I have always loved that lake. It is small ; but there are ideas of pastoral simplicity and comfort and retirement more inseparably connected with it than with the grandeur of Loch Katrine. But indeed, what can be more sublimely grand than the environs of Achray ? The light of the morning sun rested on the grey caverns and wooded ravines of the stupendous Ben Venue, and revealed the wild forms of the Trosachs on the opposite side of the lake.

Meeting a reaper going forth with his sickle on his shoulder, I found that I had inadvertently crossed the bridge of Turk,

and passed by the entrance into Glenfinlas. I therefore returned; for I had resolved to husband my stock of pleasure, and visit by degrees the rest of the scenery.

I entered Glenfinlas. The serenity of autumn reigned over the stupendous cliffs and the mountain streams. I was again fortunate in the cottage at which I sought for an asylum. I sent my horses on to Ardcean-a-crochan, on the shores of Achray. I was now amid the haunted scenes described by Scott, and I resigned myself to rapture. My host was a bard, and had endless tales of superstition and warfare to narrate. Of my feelings and employment during the first day of my re-

sidence here, perhaps the following lines, though very inadequate, may give a better idea than I could do in prose :

1.

That restless fire was in my breast
 Which haunts my path in solitude,
 Up the grey mountain's side I prest
 To seek the cavern's shelter rude ;
 I twined the heath-bell's lingering flowers ;
 The light which cheers my lonely hours
 Was glowing mid the autumnal wood,
 And charm'd the path of solitude.

2.

The mountain air was calm and pure,
 No sound was through the forest borne,
 Save from afar, on Lowland moor,
 When rose the voice of hound and horn.

Through scenes remote and wild I stray'd,
 O'er rocky steep and haunted glade ;
 And when the autumnal day was done,
 I rested on a mossy stone.

3.

Through broken cliffs and woods afar
 Was seen the twilight's radiance bright ;
 And, dear to lovers' eyes, the star
 Of Eve disclosed her silvery light.
 It was a sad and soothing scene ;
 A train of cherish'd thoughts serene,
 Offspring of Fancy, sweetly stole
 With magic influence on my soul.

4.

No murmur broke the rising dream
 That floated on my ravish'd sight,
 Save when the roar of mountain stream
 Loaded the balmy breeze of night ;

Or when the leaves, that yet exhale
 A dying fragrance in the gale,
 Borne by the zephyr from on high,
 Fell rustling on my closed eye.

* * *

5.

Methought that while I gazed on high,
 And watch'd declining tints afar,
 A form seem'd issuing from the sky
 More bright than Eve's refulgent star.
 I traced its flight o'er Ben Venue ;—
 More near the glorious vision drew,
 Till, beaming through the tangled wood,
 That heavenly shape before me stood.

6.

The seraph bore a female form ;
 Light robes of tartan round her flew ;

An airy harp hung on her arm,
 Intwined with flowers of various hue,
 A dazzling glory round her shone ;
 She pointed to the mountains lone,
 Where grey Glenfinlas lies o'erhung
 By rocks in wild disorder flung.

7.

“ These are the realms,” she said, “ where long
 Have I, with guardian care, survey’d
 The scenes that *once* awoke the song
 Of bards divine that hither stray’d ;
 The Genius of that land am I,
 Where every pine-clad steep on high,
 Each lonely sheal or ruin grey,
 Or even the trembling of a spray,
 Recalls the marvellous deeds of yore,
 And legends of mysterious lore.

8.

“ There is not in yon valley wide
A cliff that hoary lichens bind ;
Scarce in the wild a spot descried,
With which a tale is not entwined,
That might with lofty strains inspire
Each master of the heavenly lyre,
And still unfading bloom display,
Till woods and rocks themselves decay.

9.

“ There, mid the shaggy solitude,
The voice of a diviner age
Exalts the soul to holy mood,
Or wakes to sympathetic rage.
Those martial strains are heard again,
That ne’er to battle call’d in vain,
And ghosts of former heroes glide,
Grim beckoning from the mountain side.

10.

" But soon the withering grasp of Time,
 Who moves with silent, viewless flight,
 Shall doom those beauteous themes sublime
 Unsung to never-ending night.
 Their glories, like the leaves which now
 Chill frosts are stealing from the bough,
 Unaided by the poet's lyre,
 In dark oblivion shall expire.

11.

" O seize their beauties ere they die,
 While yet the pastoral life remains ;
 My willing aid shall still be nigh,
 To prompt for thee the impassion'd strains
 Even yet the hoary seer can tell
 The fortunes strange that here befell
 Full many a mighty chief of old
 In legendary fame inroll'd :
 O listen, ere their charms are fled,
 And mix'd for ever with the dead !"

12.

I woke ; the lovely dream was gone ;
 Yet on the balmy gale of even
 Celestial melodies were thrown,
 And now retreating rose to Heaven.
 Each object in the woodland range
 By moonlight seem'd more wild and strange :
 The lengthening vale below was lost
 In shadowy mist and dazzling frost ;
 The silvery beams with glittering play
 Danced on the waves of Loch Achray ;
 And as I hail'd the charms of night,
 Mine inward gleams were passing bright.

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After the era of enchantment comes
 that of reality.

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The following winter brought with it the time when I was to reside in Edinburgh, for the sake of qualifying myself for the profession of law. My father had conceived the highest opinion of my talents ; and though an ample fortune rendered a profession unnecessary, yet as no opportunity then offered of obtaining a seat in Parliament, even though I had been of age, it was judged advantageous that I should devote part of my time to the study of jurisprudence, in Scotland.— I shall not dwell on my affliction at leaving my retirement a second time. It had now become dearer to me than ever ; and I reflected with bitter regret on my own conduct, for not having set a higher value on my past hours, which were now

gone for ever. But, on the other hand, I entertained the fascinating hopes of distinction and splendour and happiness at Edinburgh. I remembered my former raptures at the sight of Mrs Siddons ; and I remembered also, that Edinburgh was now the residence of Lady L——.

The night before leaving home, I went to take leave of the Priory Cottage. It was on the second of November. Silence reigned through the woods. The sky was dark, watery, and louring. A chill wind occasionally swept over the rustling leaves. All was still and disconsolate in the Priory ;—no light,—no sound of airy harp !—I returned mournfully homeward.

The visions of future enjoyment in a city life, from which at times I derived consolation, were soon to be obscured and overthrown.—Let those to whom the picture which I am about to paint appears overcharged, remember, that to a sensibility the most excessive, I added the most infantine inexperience. I knew not that the only mode by which a man of genius and feeling can safely steer his course through the world, is by means of an acquired insensibility to the characters and scenes that surround him. I must here repeat, that I believed human life to contain little else than a continuation of the rapture and enchantment which I had enjoyed in solitude. I expected to meet with sympathy, if not in all, at least in

many individuals. I expected to find sensibility and taste, as well as learning and industry, attending each professor of the university, and each individual at the bar. I expected—but it is needless to detail the absurd wanderings of my fancy. After such golden visions had fled like the morning cloud, let me not be censured for describing my disappointment as so excessive that it amounted to despair.

Sometimes I recollected, that one, whose hopes had aspired to immortality, ought to regard only with contempt or pity the characters and pursuits of those who laboured only for mean and sensual and temporary gratifications. At such moments, the earnestness and self-sufficiency

of the special pleader, or the frivolous vanity of the mere man of fashion, appeared both disgusting and ridiculous. But it was not till some years after that I discovered the practicability of becoming insensible to the feelings by which I was then overwhelmed. No longer vainly expecting to have his happiness increased in society, the man devoted to noble and elevated pursuits, after his first disappointment loses its dominion, becomes gradually superior to the influence of meaner considerations. Wrapt up in his own enjoyments,—in the consciousness of his own elevation,—protected as if by an invincible talisman, he smiles to think that the tumultuous coarseness of the bar,—all the folly and debasing passions of fashionable

life,—all the malignity and grossness of the vulgar, cannot divert his mind from the objects of his secret attachment, for which alone he lives, and which have elevated his mind far above each ignoble feeling, and above the weakness of being disturbed and interrupted by ordinary causes.—But it is time to particularize the events of my new career.

CHAPTER IV.

I ARRIVED at Edinburgh in a still and gloomy evening of November. I had left the country with a mind filled with visions of delight, such as few imaginations ever have had the power to frame.

At first, much of my former illusions was preserved. The dense fogs, which rendered every object gigantic, expanded to sublimity the grand features of this romantic city. The fashionable season had commenced, and the town was thronged with the gay and idle, as well as with the

grave and busy. But when I formerly visited Edinburgh, it was under the influence of vernal cheerfulness. Now there was an increasing murkiness in the atmosphere which did not please me. It rained as I entered St Andrew's Square ; and the gloom, notwithstanding the glare of carriages and lamps, was perceptible and oppressive.

Some cards of invitation for the day of my arrival were presented to me at my hotel ; but I thought of the serious purposes for which I came, and resolved to shut myself up in my apartments for the first evening, and employ myself in unpacking and arranging my favourite books and legal authors which had preceded me

on the journey. I rightly thought that before entering into dissipation, it would be necessary to bestow some attention on more important pursuits, that I might at least put my affairs into a proper train.

Having promised that I would at all events go through the *forms* of a course of legal study, next morning I purchased a ticket of the professor of civil law. I never had any intention of attending his lectures above three or four days ; but even this proved more than my temper would endure. I remember the second day of my penance, when I tried to open the door of the lecturer's apartments, my disgust increased so far, that I was seized with a cold shuddering, and obli-

ged to desist. I repeated my attempts on the lock three times with no better success, till a fellow student approaching with boisterous impetuosity, shame and despair gave me resolution, and I entered. The following hour, however, proved so insupportable, that I resolved never again to be subjected to a public lecture on law. Such was the commencement of my professional progress.

A visit to the Court of Session, the scene of my future honours, was not attended with better success. I heard noise, and tumult, and coarseness. I breathed a pestilential air. I looked in vain for a countenance on which could be discovered a trace of sensibility. The scene was

more than I could bear; and my agony of disappointment deprived me of health and of sleep.

Such readers as may be disposed to censure my confessions as evincing a degree of morbid sensibility which can scarcely have ever existed in reality, and which, to their judgments, appears the consequence of mere imagination, without any foundation in nature and truth, ought to be reminded that I was not like other men. My constitution had received, in early life, a shock from which it never had recovered. Besides, let it be remembered that the universe perhaps could scarcely furnish another instance of an education

conducted till the age of twenty, in such perfect solitude as I had experienced !

The following evening, wearied of my books and of myself, I resolved to accept one of the invitations I had received. I went to an evening party, anticipating enjoyment, and here I flattered myself I might depend on finding my expectations realized ;—but when were realities ever found to equal the creations of poetic imagination and of hope ? I found, indeed, splendour and beauty, and high rank. I mingled with the trains of orators and statesmen, and titled beauties ; but I was miserably disappointed. I shall not attempt fully to describe what my expectations had been ; suffice it to say, that

I hoped to find a scene in unison with feelings, which probably never existed in any mind or frame but my own. I hoped to meet sympathy, with emotions such as those to whose society I was introduced had never felt. Were I to detail all that my imagination had fondly pictured to itself in solitude, of the charms of polite society, it might indeed be deemed the idle dream of a maniac. I am not writing a satire. I shall neither draw characters nor paint the realities which were presented to me instead of the enchantments which I had previously drawn, and adorned with all the brightest colouring of fancy.

Fevered with disappointment, after an

hour's penance, I returned to my hotel. The agitation which I underwent produced a violent fit of illness. I denied myself to all visitors. My servants answered for me all cards of invitation in the negative. I did not see the light of the sun for many days. My physician at length compelled me to walk out ; but a giddiness made me totter, and I soon returned. My servant, however, considering me as sufficiently convalescent to receive the visits of my friends, admitted a young man, a distant relation of my family, who had come to Edinburgh with views similar to mine, but with a character and feelings widely different. Besides, being of age, and already in possession of a large fortune, he lived in the most expensive ele-

gance. Wearied of myself and of the world, disgusted with every thing, I yielded to his importunity, and agreed to dine at his house.

The love of simple enjoyment—the autumnal feelings—the remembrance of the heath and the lake, of the mountain and the muse, that I had brought with me from the country, were lost. They were already overwhelmed by disappointment, by the sickness of the heart, and the fever of the world. They were gone! I grasped in vain at their dim and distant remains! They faded, I thought for ever. My bosom swelled with anguish, and I burst into tears.

I rushed into dissipation to forget myself. I met a large party at dinner. I had come without anticipating pleasure. I only wished to escape from my own thoughts. I was weary of solitude and gloom and misery. The lights and the glare and glitter and liveliness of the scene by which I was surrounded, exhilarated my spirits. That evening the play was patronised by the Duchess of ———. It was necessary, therefore, to be seen there. I went in the intoxication of the moment.

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My sight wandered round the theatre, till at length it was fixed on a box nearly opposite. I could not be mistaken. Ha-

ving once beheld that form before, it was impossible not to remember it. When I had last beheld Lady L——, her angelic countenance was illuminated by the glow of twilight in a summer's eve. Now, alas ! what a change ! Amid the glare of artificial light, and the dull tumult of artificial society, I recognised her. No ! I could not be mistaken. That form and countenance had never departed from my heart.

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But oh, the delirious agony of those moments !—Before, when I beheld that angelic form, that enchanting smile, it was with a mind filled with rapturous vi-

sions such as few imaginations ever were sufficiently powerful to frame. Oh that the feelings of that period would return ! —Oh days of innocence and bliss, too lightly prized, how had your divine influence faded away ! How did the sweet remembrances contrast the bitterness of my present emotions !

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As I was leaving the house a tumult arose, owing to a party of rioters, some of whom had suddenly quarrelled in the lobby. Lady L—— was leaving her box. For a moment she seemed deserted by her party. From a sudden impulse I started forward. I almost hoped that

my figure and my name might not be unknown to her. I was not mistaken. She looked for an instant on my countenance, and accepted the arm which I offered as far as the outer door, thanked me, stepped into her carriage, and some of her party now reappearing, I withdrew. Before the carriage drove off, I heard her say to the footman, “The Duchess of _____’s.”

I still felt her touch—I still beheld her smile of acquiescence. I stood between the pillars of the entrance, till forced to leave it by the pressure of the crowd. A sudden thought struck me. I knew that I had a card of invitation for that evening for the party which Lady L——— was

going to attend. I ran into my hotel, dressed, and in ten minutes was in the midst of the most brilliant assembly that had been that winter seen at Edinburgh.

I did not, at my first entrance, behold Lady L——. My eyes wandered round the apartment in search of her. At length her beautiful form flashed on my sight. She was approaching the spot where I stood. At this moment a universal movement and gaze of those who stood opposite to the door, marked the entrance of some persons of distinction ; and I heard the name of Mr S. announced.

In the presence of the man to whom I owed so many of my happiest hours, a

tremor of delight and exultation pervaded my frame, as, with all that brilliance and fascination of manner by which the "Last Minstrel" is distinguished in society, I saw him approach Lady L——, and begin gaily to converse with her. At that moment the Duchess of —— desired Mr S. to look at the decorations of the next room. Lady L—— accompanied them. The apartment was fitted up to represent the interior of Melrose Abbey. This admirable author was then engaged in writing the "Lay of the Last Minstrel;" and the Duchess of —— had heard the beginning of the second canto recited a few nights before. She wished, she said, to hear it again, and had ordered suitable scenery to be prepared. Mr S.

begged to be excused. He turned to Lady L——, and withdrawing a curtain at one end of the Gothic aisle, disclosed a harp, at which, after some hesitation and interruption, I beheld her lovely form bending over the instrument.

The first tones that vibrated from the harp reminded me of “early time.” They were the same that I had listened to on the wild shores of Loch Ow; and they had indeed never departed from my remembrance. Even amid all the distress of my first disappointments after arriving in Edinburgh, they were sometimes heard soothing the anguish of my nightly fever, and my dreams of misery. I knew them again. I sighed to think what a contrast

the glare of lamps, and the heat and tumult of a crowded assembly, afforded to the mild glow of twilight, and the tranquillity and cool fragrance of the forest.

“What,” said Lady L——, addressing herself to Mr S., “shall I sing?”—“Sing,” replied he, “the ballad composed by poor insane R——. Its absurdity is amusing; and your performance would give effect to any composition, however contemptible.”—Mr S. then, with mock solemnity, read the title of the poem,—

A BALLAD,

Shewing how a noble Baron had won the love of a beautiful and virtuous young Maiden of lowly estate ; how he forsook her to marry another Lady for her high birth and fortune ; and the tragical ends of all three within five months after the marriage.

PART FIRST.

HIGH feast was in the hall : *

There was gaming and glee ;

The minstrels deftly played,

And sung merrily.

* I know not whether I shall be thought excusable in printing verses so infantine as these. *They* are indeed truly infantine ; but with what propriety this epithet is believed to convey the prevailing character of Mr Wordsworth, let those decide who have read with attention the preface to the *fourth edition* of the “ Lyrical Ballads.”

They sung of mighty deeds
That befell in Arthur's days ;
And woke to King Richarde
The lofty song of praise.

There were Ladies in hall,
That smiled right fair to see ;
In cloth of gold and pall,
They daunced merrilie.

But the doughty Barons carped
As they sat o'er the wine,
Of battles lost and won
In holy Palestine.

They carped of hawk and hound,
And of steeds fleet and strong ;
While the goblet moved round,
And they heard the merry sound
Of minstrel, harp, and song.

They heard the merry sound,
 But recked not the words ;
 Such inward joy they found,
 As they carped of hawk and hound,—
 Of tournaments renown'd,—
 And the temper of swords.

* * *

'Twas Saint Mary's eve,
 And the twilight was fair ;
 The gales forgot to breathe ;
 Right fragrant was the air.

Fair Edith sat alone
 By the hawthorn tree ;
 Right grievous was her moan,
 Like one in miserie.

She loved the Baron bold
 That was feasting so gay :

But her fainting heart grew cold,
 When the merry news were told,
 'Twas his nuptial day !

The vesper bells begun
 Through the calm air to ring ;
 For the holy rites were done,
 And the priest's blessing.

It was the marriage day
 Of the Baron bold and gay
 With fair Geraldine of the Lake :—
 For her lineage high,
 And her laughing black eye,
 A lowlie maiden shy
 What Baron would not forsake ?—

Right pleasantly the bell
 Through the calm air did ring :
 Fair Edith heard full well
 Its merry changes swell,
 As she sat weeping.

She heeded not the sound,—

For her heart beat so fast,
That she deem'd each rebound

It gave would be the last !

She reck'd not the ray

That the twilight cast ;
For, at length, as she lay,
Her senses quite away

From the sweet maiden pass'd.

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—'Tis the midnight chime !—

No reckoning of time

Kept the Barons blithe in hall :—

But the Lady withdrew,

And her maidens too,

And doffed her broider'd pall.

By fits through the tower
 The merry roar was heard ;
 But abroad, in woodland bower,
 Right soothing was that hour,
 For not a leaf was stirr'd.

The Lady stood alone,
 And to breathe the cool air
 To the casement she has gone,
 Where the moonlight shone fair.

On the fresh dews of night
 Fell the moonbeam cold ;
 And the leaves shone bright,
 Full pleasant to behold.

As when angels in heaven
 Lull the blest to repose,
 To the night air given
 Sweet music arose!

“ It is not in hall
That the soft measures swell ;
No minstrel of all
Knows his art so well ! ”

The Lady called then ;
She stamped with her feet ;
She bade her maidens tell
Who sung so passing sweet.

“ Though the strains are sweet,
Yet minstrelsy, I trow,
So wild and full of grief
Was never heard till now.”

“ Oh, ’tis a maid forlorn
In the moonlight grove,
That has sat down to mourn
Her fortunes in love.”

When the Baron so gay
Was leaving the hall,
He heard the plaintive lay
On the night breeze fall.

Pale grew his visage then,
His merriment had fled ;
And so sad seem'd the strain,
That he turn'd him again,
And a deeper draught did drain
Ere he sought his bridal bed.

PART SECOND.

'Twas a mild autumn day,
Through the banners grey
Of "frost-fog" rose the morn ;
On the foliage bright
Hung the dews of night

Amid the woods forlorn.

The Baron so gay

With his men are away

To the forest that day,

With hound and horse and horn.

Oh sweet were the sounds

As the merry train pass'd,

And loud the response

That the mountains cast,

When the bridles rang clear

In the forest drear,*

And the soft breeze of morn

Swell'd the distant horn !

* " It was a pleasure but to hear

The bridles ringing sharp and clear

Amid the forest green."—*Rose.*

The Lady has gone
 To the woodlands alone
 To hear that cheering note :
 To breathe the perfume
 Of the fading bloom
 The deep grove she has sought :
 On each drooping spray
 Sat the red-breast gay,
 And strain'd his merry throat.

Oh fair was the scene
 In the shades serene
 When the yellow gleams around
 To the Lady's view
 Shew'd the copsewood's hue,
 And the dank leaves on the ground !
 In the lonely smile
 Of Nature awhile
 The Lady had joyaunce found ;
 But the self-same tone

Of the Maiden's moan;
 That ere now she had known,
 Once more began to sound !]

Yet, alas for the Maid,
 For her voice was decay'd;
 'Tis the same, but not so strong :
 “ 'Tis fainter now
 Than it was, I trow,
 When she woke her midnight song !
 Ah me ! she is wild !—
 Come hither, my child,
 And in accents mild
 To a friend unfold thy wrong !
 If so pale is thy look,
 Like the leaves in the brook,
 Thy life will not be long.”

She had twined for her head
 A garland red

Of the heath-bell's lingering flowers ;
 But her cheeks were pale,
 Like the leaves in the vale,
 Which the breeze sends down in showers.

“ Bless thee, Lady fair !

Look, the trees are bare !

Hark ! the cold breeze rends the bowers !

Yet I have known

When the sunbeam shone

Warm on this frozen heart.

Thou wilt not believe,

Thou wilt think I deceive,

When I tell thee the woods,

That are now so sad,

Once were cover'd with buds,

And with garlands were hung !

See there ! how the leaves depart !

They are drooping now !

They are dead, I trow !

And I—poor I am mad.”

God help thee ! thought the Lady then,

As her mansion proud she sought agen.



PART THIRD.

'Twas a winter night in December drear,

Not a star was seen the gloom to cheer ;

Fast pour'd the rain ; on the woodlands brown

The shades of the black'ning sky fell down.

The Lady with grief in her chamber view'd

The gathering darkness on lake and wood.

Sore sigh'd she in her bower forlorn,—

“ Would to Heaven I heard the Baron's horn ! ”

The Baron had gone to Glenfinlas grey

With his train to drive the deer that day.

Not a man had return'd :—On the Lady fair

Sore press'd the gathering load of care.

“To the western tower, my maidens, repair ;
 For the voice of the Baron’s horn watch there ;
 Whilst I alone in my chamber tarry,
 And pray for aid to sweet St. Mary.”

The Lady was left in her chamber lone ;
 She was aware of a lowly moan,
 That on the silent gloom was thrown.—
 She was aware of a pale light ;—
 She was aware of a form in white ;—
 And the Lady shudder’d with affright.

A pale light on the form was flung,
 And the charnel damps on its visage hung.
 The Lady in haste her bosom cross’d,—
 For she was aware of the Maiden’s Ghost !

The Lady fell in a deadly swoonde ;
 But her menials raised her from the ground :—
 “Sad tidings, alas ! we bring to thee !
 On the rocks are kindling bale fires three :

No friendly token met our ear ;
But the horns of the foe are sounding near !”

The Lady has left her painted bower ;
She has gone to the western tower :—
A minute there had scarcely flown,
Ere she was aware of a heavy groan !

The Lady mark'd the Baron's form
Come wading dimly through the storm :
He pointed to his bosom bare,
And a deadly gash was bleeding there :
To the distant wood he pointed then,
And melted from her dizzy ken.

To the distant wood the Lady flew :
All comfort from her heart withdrew,
And her senses fast were fleeting too.
In her path arose a pale light,
That led her tottering steps aright.

The stag-hound woke a dismal yell ;
 He watch'd the spot where his master fell.
 The corpse-light danced amid the dark,
 And the Baron's form was stiff and stark.

The Lady pierced the tangled brake,—
 “ Listen ! 'tis I ! sweet love, awake ! ”
 She laid her on the bloody green ;
 She raised his head and wiped his e'en :
 But when she saw that life was gone,
 The Lady woke a dreary moan.

The mountain stream was swoll'n with rain,
 Through the lonely wood it dash'd amain.
 To the rocky brink the Lady fled—
 In the roaring stream she made her bed,—
 And the waves roll'd darkly o'er her head.



The strain had ceased, but its tones continued to float on my fancy. The assembly was over ; I was in the open street ; but I was no longer the same person !— Though it was winter, the western breeze was awake ; but its balmy breath had no power to revive the wonted trains of thought. I wooed its influence, and mournfully attempted a self-examination. What was the nature of my indescribable feelings, so different from all that I had known,—so captivating and yet so painful ? But it was in vain ; I could follow out no one idea with clearness and accuracy. My mind was a chaos of conflicting elements.

I could not bear the idea of confinement and restraint in my own chamber. I wandered on insensibly, without knowing whither I went. I heard the tones of distant music. I stood breathless and listened. No ! I could not be mistaken. I advanced--the tones became more audible. I looked round--I found myself in Charlotte Square. Here, I knew, was the residence of Lady L——. These were the well-known tones of *her* harp and *her* voice. I watched every low and plaintive note (for the strain was slow and mournful) with indescribable ecstasy. As I looked round on the quiet and solemn scene, and beheld the moon sailing in majestic serenity over the venerable

towers of the castle, while all below seemed buried in the profoundest stillness and slumber, I indulged in the delicious fancy that there existed a certain congeniality of soul between myself and Lady L——, that, when all other beings seemed lost in insensibility and oblivion, we alone were awake, each enjoying pleasures as pure and innocent as they are captivating and exalted.

After such emotions, was it possible I could sleep? The night passed away—I scarcely know how it past—and morning found me a prey to the same restlessness and fever. Oh what internal conflicts then preyed upon my soul! How

did the recollections agonize me of the independent and tranquillizing joys that I had known in solitude !

* * *

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

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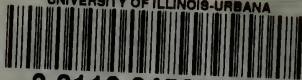








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